DH
DECCAN HERALD
The Power of Good

RCB becomes first team to reach playoffs

Venkatesh Iyer comes to the party in 23-run win over PBKS

Page 14

Nation
No jealousy against Vijay: Rajinikanth
P.6

Business
Venture capitalists bet on 10-minute home services platforms
P.11

World
Congo Ebola outbreak global emergency: WHO P.13

Nation
Gadchiroli now Maoist-free P.12

Quickly

B'luru-Mumbai new train flagged off

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Sunday virtually flagged off a new train service from SMVT Bengaluru to Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (Mumbai). The railway minister announced that a Vande Bharat Sleeper train service on the Bengaluru-Mumbai route will also be launched shortly. Testing on the Bengaluru-Mangaluru route for running a Vande Bharat is aslo underway, he said.
Details on Page 3

Indian killed in drone attack on Moscow

An Indian worker was killed and three others injured in a drone attack in the Moscow region, the Indian embassy said Sunday. The incident comes amid escalating hostilities between Russia and Ukraine. "One Indian worker has lost his life and three others have been injured in a drone attack in (the) Moscow region. Embassy officials have met the injured workers," the Indian Embassy said on 'X'.
Details on Page 13

Kerala Cabinet to take oath today

A 21-member Cabinet headed by Chief Minister V D Satheesan will be sworn in in Kerala on Monday. Loyalists of AICC general secretary K C Venugopal, who was one of the contenders for the CM's post, seem to have got an upper hand in the selection of Cabinet members. Senior leader Ramesh Chennithala, who was another contender for the top post, is also a member of the Cabinet.
Details on Page 6

India, Netherlands reset strategic ties

Focus on defence industrial coop despite history of Dutch support to Pak

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India and the Netherlands have agreed on a roadmap to elevate their bilateral relations to a strategic partnership, with particular focus on defence industrial cooperation, which once remained limited, partially due to the Dutch submarine and naval technology exports to Pakistan.

Before concluding his visit to The Hague on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with his Dutch counterpart Rob Jetten, witnessed the signing of 13 other pacts, in addition to the roadmap for strategic partnership.

A Memorandum of Understanding on Mobility and Migration between the two governments and a Roadmap for Cooperation in the Development of Green Hydrogen were among the pacts inked during the visit. The two sides also agreed to negotiate a mutual legal assistance treaty and a new extradition treaty.

The roadmap to strategic partnership, agreed upon during the Modi-Jetten meeting, focuses particularly on defence industrial cooperation with the opportunities to be jointly explored by the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers and the Netherlands Industry for Defence and Security.

"My talks with Prime Minister Rob Jetten were extensive, covering a wide range of topics. One such area is related to defence and security. I spoke about the possibility of a defence industrial roadmap at the earliest," Modi wrote on X.
▸ Netherlands, Page 4
India trashes allegations on media freedom, Page 13
Swedish honour to Prime Minister Modi, Page 13

New chapter in partnership
Ink agreements in defence, critical minerals & other key sectors

- Pact on migration and mobility, to facilitate movement of Indians to Netherlands for jobs, education
- Agree to enhance cooperation in science and innovation, sustainability, health, agriculture, water management, climate change, etc.
- Agree on roadmap for development of green hydrogen

PM Narendra Modi and his Dutch counterpart Rob Jetten during a visit to the iconic Afsluitdijk dam. AFP

Indo-Dutch dairy training centre for B'luru

An Indo-Dutch Centre of Excellence on Training in Dairy will be opened at the Centre of Excellence for Animal Husbandry in Bengaluru, India and the Netherlands agreed during PM Modi's visit to The Hague. Page 4

EU FTA at 'record speed'

The FTA between India and the EU will unlock new opportunities, PM Modi said, as the president of the European Commission vowed to sign the deal by the end of this year and operationalise it "at record speed".
Details on Page 6

NOTHING LEFT TO CHANCE

Aspirants undergo security checks before appearing for the UPPSC LT Grade Assistant Teacher Mains exam, in Prayagraj, Uttar Preash, on Sunday. PTI

CBSE slashes fee for re-evaluation of answer sheets

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The CBSE on Sunday announced that it would slash the fees for re-evaluation of answer sheets of class 12 board exams, after concerns were raised about the on-screen marking system done for the first time during the recently conducted exams.

Secondary Education Secretary Sanjay Kumar announced that answer sheet viewing and re-evaluation charges will be slashed to Rs 100 from Rs 700 and Rs 500, respectively.
Details on Page 6

Cybercrooks make hay as APK fraud zooms

Most victims senior citizens, those with minimal tech info

DH EXCLUSIVE

PRAJWAL D'SOUZA
BENGALURU, DHNS

While headlines about cybercrimes in Karnataka have largely focused on digital arrests and investment fraud, the state is witnessing a silent, worrying trend: the rapid rise of Android Package Kit (APK) fraud.

Exclusive data accessed by *DH* showed APK fraud in the state skyrocketed by a whopping 190.46% from 325 cases in 2024 to 944 cases in 2025.

This year, the state has already reported 458 cases till April. At this rate of 114.5 cases per month, the state is projected to register 1,374 cases of APK fraud this year.

Unlike digital arrest scams and investment frauds, aka pig butchering scams, APK fraud doesn't rely on psychologically manipulating victims with threats, harassment or greed.

Cybercriminals will send a message on WhatsApp or Telegram, creating a false sense of urgency: a pending electricity bill leading to a connection termination, pending credit card points, a KYC update, an invitation for a wedding, etc. These messages will be accompanied by an .apk file.

While the .apk extension is the standard file format used to install legitimate Android applications, third-party APK files sent by the fraudsters can allow back-door access to the devices. These malware-laced files can be custom-built or easily bought on Telegram marketplaces and the dark web, investigators say.
▸ Cybercrime, Page 4

State trend
325 cases in 2024 | 944 cases in 2025
458 cases 2026 (till April)

Common APK fraud file names
- Wedding_Invite_Card.apk
- PM_Kisan_Beneficiary_Status.apk
- IndiaPost_Address_Update.apk
- RTO_Traffic_Challan_Pending.apk
- ITR_Refund_Status_2025.apk
- Amazon_PartTime_Jobs.apk
- PAN_KYC_Mandatory_Verification.apk

'No tangible concessions' in US response to proposal: Iran

TEHRAN, AFP: Iranian media said Sunday that the United States had failed to make any concrete concessions in its latest response to its proposed agenda for negotiations to end the war.

The Fars news agency said Washington had presented a five-point list which included a demand for Iran to keep only one nuclear site in operation and transfer its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to the United States.

The US also refused to release "even 25%" of Iran's frozen assets abroad or pay any reparations for the damage inflicted on Iran during the war which broke out on February 28, according to Fars.

The report added that the US had conditioned the cessation of hostilities on all fronts on the start of negotiations.

The Mehr news agency, meanwhile, said, "The United States, offering no tangible concessions, wants to obtain concessions that it failed to obtain during the war, which will lead to an impasse in the negotiations."

In its proposal, Tehran had called for an end of the war on all fronts including Israel's campaign in Lebanon, as well as a halt to the naval blockade by the United States on Iranian ports.

Fars said the Iranian proposal had emphasised that Tehran would continue to manage the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

On Sunday, Iranian armed forces spokesman Abolfazl Shekarchi warned United States President Donald Trump against restarting attacks on Iran.

Drone strike triggers fire near UAE N-plant

A drone strike triggered a fire near a nuclear power station in the emirate of Abu Dhabi on Sunday, authorities said. No injuries were reported.
Details on Page 13

Regularising deviations in B'luru to be costly

DH SPECIAL

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

Rs 5,000 per square foot — that's the minimum penalty property owners in Bengaluru are required to pay for condoning deviations from sanctioned building plans.

While the cost of regularising building violations — the state government recently increased deviation limits from 5% to 15% — appears expensive, it is said to be an attractive offer for property owners, given the massive increase in real estate value.

What's more, the relaxation is expected to create a new stream of revenue for the municipal corporations in the city, which are starved of funds. Some residents, however, insist that the regularisation is uncalled for, as the cost of undoing the damage will be much higher.

Last week, the state government notified the amended building bye-laws applicable to all five newly carved city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). The notification outlines the fee and penalty for condoning deviations beyond permissible limits, based on the guidance value of the site.

Broadly, the fee is based on residential and non-residential categories. While the regularisation fee for setback violations ranges between 6% and 12% of the guidance value, the government has fixed a minimum consideration of Rs 5,000 per square foot.

On top of that, the notification has also prescribed a separate penalty of 14% to 18% for violations of the sanctioned plan.
▸ Building violations, Page 4

GSI proposes to search for lithium in Raichur forest

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

About 510 acres of forest land in the arid heartland of north Karnataka have come under focus after the Geological Survey of India (GSI) sought to look for lithium deposits in the area.

The land is part of the Amareshwara block forest, an undulating area, where the GSI will drill 37 bore holes of four-inch diameter.

The survey will involve felling 941 trees, with the GSI agreeing to pay for the subsequent afforestation.
Details on Page 4

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NO RELIEF

This summer is sultrier; blame it on high relative humidity

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

If you feel this summer is sultrier than the previous ones, then blame it on the relative humidity that makes one feel a degree or two more than the actual temperature.

According to Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre, nearly 82% of the state's geography has reported relative humidity above 90% on most days in May.

N Puviarasan, Head of the Meteorological Centre-Bengaluru, pointed at a lack of north-westerly winds and regular thundershowers that have been lashing the state as the reasons for higher relative humidity.

SWEAT ZONE
As per IMD, relative humidity is percentage of water vapor in air compared to maximum water vapor it can hold at a given temperature

- High humidity makes hot days feel hotter because our sweat doesn't evaporate easily

80% of Karnataka reported above 90% relative humidity in May

"We are facing an ENSO-neutral phase, which means middle ground between El Niño and La Niña. During this phase, there is a higher probability of only western and eastern winds over the ocean," he said and added that currently Karnataka is witnessing more western and eastern winds flowing over the state. "These winds are carrying moisture from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The western winds are making North Interior Karnataka more humid, while eastern winds are making parts of South Interior Karnataka feel hotter," he said.

He also explained that currently the sun's axis is right above the earth, making days hotter, and as humidity content is higher, the night temperature is also higher.

Eashwar Hasabi, Medical Superintendent of Karnataka Medical College & Research Institute, Hubballi, said relative humidity has multiple impacts on the body. "People indoors face more discomfort than people outdoors. People could face dehydration resulting in fatigue. Longer period of dehydration could affect multiple organs."

He said people in coastal areas need to take extra precaution as relative humidity is very high in those areas.

Maruthi Sevanagar residents live with sewage at their doorsteps for 2 months

Face health risks as agencies clash over repair access

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

Lack of coordination between the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) and railway officials has left residents of Muddappa Road in Maruthi Sevanagar stranded with overflowing sewage for nearly two months.

Raw sewage has been flooding streets and roadside drains since March 20, creating a major health hazard for the neighbourhood, a mix of residential and commercial complexes, including a hospital, church, and retail outlets.

The trouble began when railway construction work allegedly buried BWSSB sewage chambers under concrete inside the railway compound near Banaswadi.

Raw sewage now pools near homes and the gates of a local church, unleashing foul odours, swarms of mosquitoes, and a fear of disease outbreaks as pre-monsoon rains approach.

BWSSB officials say they cannot clear the blockages without railway permission to excavate the paved area.

Residents have bombarded the BBMP's Sahaaya portal and social media, tagging the Chief Minister's Office, BWSSB chairman, Sarvagnanagar MLA and Energy Minister KJ George, and Bengaluru North City Corporation, describing a frustrating bureaucratic deadlock.

"For over two months, residents of Muddappa Road, Maruthi Sevanagar have been living with an open sewage nightmare, foul smell, stagnant water, and a dangerous surge in mosquitoes right outside our homes," said Naveen, a resident.

"The BWSSB knows about the problem and has tried to fix it, but every time their team arrives, railway staff turn them away citing jurisdictional boundaries. This is not just an inconvenience; this is a public health emergency."

Sajjan G, representative of the church on Muddappa Road, detailed repeated BWSSB efforts with jetting machines that failed due to the buried pit.

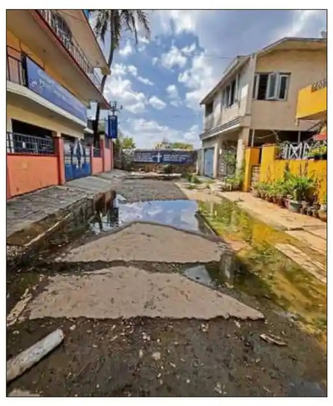
"The BWSSB has requested the Railway Department to fix the issue in many ways, including sending a written letter, but no permission has been given to date," he said.

"Their claim is that BWSSB sewage water cannot be allowed inside railway land. The Railways are not willing to understand the plight, suffering, and health risks to the residents. State and central departments must work in collaboration."

One letter, one permission

Naveen urged a simple fix. "We are simply asking the railway authorities at the Bengaluru Banaswadi Division to give the BWSSB clearance to do their job. One letter, one permission; that is all it takes."

Neither the BWSSB nor the Railways responded to *DH's* queries. With monsoon looming, residents fear contaminated sumps and drinking water.



Blocked BWSSB sewage chambers have led to a continuous overflow of sewage water into roadside drains and residential areas on Muddappa Road in Maruthi Sevanagar.

TURF WAR

Residents' claims
Residents allege railway construction buried BWSSB sewage chambers, while poor coordination and denial of access to BWSSB teams have left the area flooded with sewage for nearly two months, creating serious health risks ahead of the monsoon.

BWSSB's position
BWSSB officials say they are unable to clear the blockage because the affected sewage chambers lie within railway property and excavation cannot proceed without permission from railway authorities.

Railways' stand
According to residents and local representatives, railway officials have refused permission for excavation, citing concerns over BWSSB sewage entering railway land.

Senior officials inspect SWD works ahead of monsoon

BENGALURU, DHNS: Ahead of the monsoon season, senior officials of the Bengaluru East City Corporation conducted a field inspection of storm water drains in the Kalkere and Hoysalanagar areas of the KR Puram Assembly constituency, amid concerns over delays in drain-cleaning works by contractors.

During the inspection, Additional Commissioner (Development) Lokhande Snehal Sudhakar visited storm water drains near the Kalkere burial ground, Krishnappa Layout, NPS School, Abhaya School, Hoysalanagar 3rd Main Road and 13th Cross Road, among other areas.

He directed officials to expedite development works at locations where retaining wall construction was either in progress or yet to begin.

He also identified several block spots that had not been cleared.

Bengaluru's gig workers feel the heat of rising fuel prices

Demand fare revision as margins shrink by the day

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

A cascading effect of the hike in fuel prices is set to hit residents hard, with app-based cab aggregators, autorickshaw unions, and delivery platforms planning a revision of their charges.

With profit margins severely hit by rising operational costs, app-based vehicle operators, including Ola and Uber drivers and local autorickshaw unions, are pushing for immediate fare rationalisation.

Gig workers and drivers on app-based platforms say they will shoulder immediate losses unless aggregators and authorities step in with relief.

"We are already running on thin margins; every extra rupee at the pump eats into our daily take-home," said Ramesh, an Ola driver who works 10 to 12 hours a day. "If fares do not change soon, many of us will have to cut hours or stop working altogether."

Autorickshaw unions and ride-hailing driver groups have scheduled meetings with platform representatives in the coming week to demand fare revisions and better fuel compensation.

"Drivers are asking for a clear mechanism tied to fuel rates so we do not have to beg for increases every time prices rise," said an auto drivers' union member.

Delivery partners for food and grocery platforms report an immediate squeeze.

"We are told delivery fees may rise for customers by Rs 2 to 5, but those changes will not reflect in our pay instantly," said Vinay Sarathi of the Gig Workers Association. "Until platforms adjust incentives, delivery riders will absorb the extra fuel cost, and that will hamper their earnings."

Santhosh, President of Sneha Jeevi Auto Drivers' Association, said the relentless rise in prices had left ordinary citizens and drivers devastated.

"It is not just petrol and diesel; even essential commodities like rice are poised to become costlier. Those of us relying on daily driving to survive are in deep distress. The recent hike of Rs 3 on petrol and diesel, coming on top of a 73-paise hike in LPG and a Rs 2 increase in CNG, is a severe blow to the driver community.

"We have already submitted memorandums demanding a revision of auto-meter fares and strict implementation of the 'One City, One Rate' system for cab drivers. While those demands remain unaddressed, these continuous fuel price hikes are fracturing our livelihoods. Cab aggregators pay drivers a mere Rs 15 to 16 per kilometre.

"Even after gruelling 12 to 14-hour workdays, running a household has become impossible. These hikes are pushing the entire driving community towards complete ruin. The government must immediately permit an auto fare revision and provide special wages to support struggling drivers."

Food delivery workers wait for orders on a busy Bengaluru street. DH PHOTO/PRASHANTH HG

RAMESH
Ola driver (who puts in 10-12 hours per day)
"We are already running on thin margins; every extra rupee at the pump eats into our daily take-home. If fares do not change soon, many of us will have to cut hours or stop working altogether.

VINAY SARATHI
Member of the Gig Workers Association
"We are told delivery fees may rise for customers by Rs 2 to 5, but those changes will not reflect in our pay instantly. Until platforms adjust incentives, delivery riders will absorb the extra fuel cost, and that will hamper their earnings.

2 farmers arrested for attacking couple in road rage incident

BENGALURU, DHNS

In a suspected case of road rage, two men were arrested for allegedly attacking an architect and her husband on the outskirts of Bengaluru, officials said on Sunday.

The accused have been identified as M Mahesh, 25, and M Govinda Raju, 39, both farmers from Dasenahalli village, police said.

According to police, the incident occurred on Friday on Hesaraghatta Main Road when Rachana, 29, a resident of Rajajinagar, honked at a car that was blocking her way.

The two men, allegedly under the influence of alcohol, then confronted her.

Rachana was returning home after delivering breakfast to her husband, Bharath, who was supervising construction work at a farmhouse in Hesaraghatta.

Police said one of the accused got out of the vehicle, began taking photographs of Rachana—who was travelling in a Rolls-Royce—and spoke to her in Hindi. She then called her husband for help. By the time he arrived, the two men had threatened to break her car window.

Rachana further said that her husband was assaulted after reaching the spot and that the accused attempted to attack him with a rock.

Some of Rachana's relatives, alerted about the incident, arrived at the scene and prevented further escalation.

The accused have been remanded in judicial custody. Officials said the suspects mistook the couple for people from outside the state.

East Corporation launches dengue awareness drive

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru East City Corporation on Sunday organised a dengue awareness programme at a BMTC depot as part of the National Dengue Day observance.

The programme focused on health education, including dengue symptoms, available treatment, preventive measures and the public's role in controlling the spread of the disease.

More than 100 BMTC depot staff members attended the event, according to a press release.

Special drive against illegal sheep, goat market sheds

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru North City Corporation on Sunday conducted a special drive against unauthorised temporary sheep and goat market sheds set up across various parts of its jurisdiction.

During the drive, officials removed temporary sheds, tarpaulin enclosures and iron barricades that had allegedly been erected illegally for sheep and goat trading on public roads, footpaths and government land without permission.

Outcry on social media over BMTC salary glitch

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has issued a clarification regarding a technical glitch during the disbursement of salary arrears at Yeshwanthpur Depot 26, dismissing misleading reports circulating on social media.

The incident occurred on May 16 during the processing of wage revision arrears.

Due to a data entry error by a billing clerk, 100 conductors were mistakenly credited with the full 26-month arrears amount instead of the scheduled 11-month first instalment.

The BMTC clarified that all other staff categories, including drivers, driver-conductors, mechanics and administrative personnel, received the correct 11-month instalment as per regulations.

Upon noticing the discrepancy, the depot manager reported the matter to the central office for swift action. The affected conductors were contacted, briefed on the situation, and requested to return the excess amount.

The corporation is managing the refund process through a QR scanner and account setup at the transport department's office near the Chowdeshwari Temple bus stand. The BMTC said official receipts are being issued to every employee returning the money.

Excess amounts have so far been recovered from 35 employees and deposited back into the depot's official account. The BMTC has urged the public and staff not to believe unverified social media posts that create unnecessary confusion.

Police register case after video of alleged cow assault goes viral

BENGALURU, DHNS: City police have registered a suo motu case after a video allegedly showing a man sexually assaulting a cow went viral on social media.

According to the FIR registered on Sunday, an official from the social media monitoring cell came across the footage posted on the X account "GarudEyeintel | Defence Intel".

The incident allegedly took place in Akkipete on May 5.

Based on the complaint, police have booked an unidentified suspect under provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Further investigation is underway.

Man arrested for murder after dispute over Rs 200 loan

BENGALURU, DHNS: Doddaballapur police have arrested a man for allegedly killing a tea shop owner following a dispute over a Rs 200 loan, police said on Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as Manjunath (40), a resident of Dyavasandra.

According to the police, the incident took place on May 12 when the accused, Muniyappa, visited Manjunath's shop and asked him for money. Manjunath refused and instead asked Muniyappa to clear his pending dues. The conversation soon escalated into an argument, during which Muniyappa assaulted Manjunath with a stick. Manjunath sustained severe injuries and later succumbed at a hospital.

Police have arrested Muniyappa and booked him under Section 103 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for murder. Further investigation is underway, police said.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Interaction: 'Madhyama Manthana'; B Ramesh, D Umapathy, Manjushree Kadakola, Dayananda to attend; Organised by Baduku Centre for Livelihoods Learning; Seminar Hall, Jnanajyothi Auditorium, Dr Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University; 11 am.

CULTURAL

Theatre Festival: 'Ranga Vaividhya' and Go Ru Channabasappa's birth anniversary, featuring play 'Mysuru Mallige' by Kalagangothri; 'Mukhyamantri' Chandru, Go Ru Channabasappa, BS Manjunathaswamy to attend; Ravindra Kalakshetra, JC Road; 6 pm.

Exhibition: International Museum Day, Halmidi Inscription and Karnataka Temples; Muniyappa, KR Ganesha, T Kempanna to attend; Organised by Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage; Venkatappa Art Gallery Auditorium; 10.30 am.

RELIGIOUS

Sermon: 'Adhika Masa Mahatme' by Kambaluru Srivatsacharya; Organised by Raghavendra Swamy Mutt; Raghavendra Swamy Mutt, 11th Cross, Thyagarajanagar; 6 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	33.0°C
Minimum	23.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	NIL
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	47%
Sunset (May 18)	6:38 pm
Sunrise (May 19)	5:54 am
Moonrise	5:59 am
Moonset	7:23 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Invites to be published in thiscolumn should be sent to: **incitytoday@deccanherald.co.in.** Please note that hard copieswill not be accepted

BLOOM & GLOOM

City's green lungs gasp for basic care amid neglect, urban growth

ARNABI MALLICK & BHUMIKA GAONKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Parks in the city are expected to serve as public spaces, but many are poorly maintained and residents have flagged safety concerns.

With temperatures rising, parks that should have been shaded resting spots have failed to serve the purpose. From lack of toilets to garbage dumping, many have become spots of neglect.

DH reporters visited some parks across the city to understand the situation and hear what the public had to say.

At HMT Layout Park in Nagasandra, residents complained about a lack of security.

"Two years ago, we would often hear about people being harassed in or around the park. The condition is better now, but we still do not find it very safe and avoid going there in the evening," said Mouhari Ghosh, a resident of the layout.

Waste disposal is another problem.

At Akkamahadevi Park in Jayanagar, the entire park has just two dustbins, a green one for wet waste and a blue one for dry waste.

Finding a place to dispose of even a bottle is a challenge, especially for visitors on the far side of the park. "I doubt there are dustbins here," said Savitha, a regular visitor.

Even at bigger parks like Cubbon Park, basic facilities such as clean washrooms are unavailable.

Visitors at Cubbon Park complained about the lack of hygiene in public washrooms. "It is a beautiful park, filled with trees, but the public washrooms are not very clean," one of them said.

Senior officials from the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) said parks are usually maintained by an agency on contract.

"The respective corporation officials also keep a close watch on the maintenance. However, there might be some lapses at some parks. Residents can complain to the respective corporations and get them rectified," a senior GBA official said.

Officials from the West and South corporations said these could be isolated instances and urged citizens to report them.

Apart from these concerns, many parks do not follow timings set by the GBA and remain closed during afternoon hours, making them inaccessible to many.

A view of Cubbon Park. DH FILE PHOTO

Officials' response

GBA: Parks are maintained by contract agencies, while corporation officials regularly monitor upkeep. Residents have been asked to report issues for rectification.

Corporations: West and South corporation officials termed the incidents isolated cases and urged citizens to flag maintenance lapses.

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner. Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column.

The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @deccanherald.co.in

Trim weak tree branches before monsoon

Residents of Raghavendra Layout in Padmanabhanagar have urged the GBA to trim dry and weak tree branches on 12th A Cross Road and 22nd Main Road before the onset of the monsoon. Despite repeated complaints, residents allege that officials have failed to take action to cut or trim the branches, which they say pose a serious risk during heavy rain and strong winds.

They warned that sudden gusts during monsoon showers could cause the weakened branches to fall on pedestrians or vehicles, endangering lives and property.

Residents have urged authorities to act proactively before any untoward incident occurs.

SG Prabhakar
Raghavendraya layout
Padmanabhanagar

Debris of uprooted tree yet to be cleared

It has been a month since a tree was uprooted during heavy showers on 9th Cross in Malleswaram, but the debris lying on the footpath is yet to be cleared by the GBA.

The obstruction has forced pedestrians to walk on the road, putting their safety at risk. Residents have urged the authorities to clear the debris at the earliest.

Sudhir S Mysore, Malleswaram

Debris from a tree uprooted during heavy showers a month ago remains uncleared on a footpath at 9th Cross in Malleswaram.

NLSIU infra woes: VC assures of changes

BENGALURU, DHNS: Following protests by students of the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) over lack of basic amenities, overcrowding, and crumbling infrastructure, the vice chancellor responded with assurances of changes.

In multiple emails sent to the students between May 14 and 16, Vice-Chancellor Sudhir Krishnaswamy underscored that "the university will prioritise the continuity of academic and residential life on campus".

"Several students raised issues and we noted 18 specific issues. At the end of the meeting, photos of these 18 issues were shared with the organisers so that we have a shared common agenda to work on. In the meeting, I was asked when the University would respond. I had assured the open house that we will respond to all issues substantively in writing within seven days, by May 21, 2026. I was corrected that seven days would end on May 20, 2026!

"I agreed that we would get all responses in by May 20, 2026. We had already begun framing responses when we received another email late on May 13, 2026 directing us to reply in 24 hours," the VC said in an email to the students on May 14.

He said that the university prioritises the highest quality and safety standards in all student services.

"Moreover, we are working to build a culture of responsibility and accountability across the university functions. We are confident that these institutional measures will contribute significantly to achieving these critical goals," the VC said.

Four foreign nationals escape from FRRO shelter

BENGALURU, DHNS: Four foreign national women escaped from a shelter supervised by the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) in Bengaluru, prompting the Kothanur police to register a case and launch an investigation, officials said on Sunday.

The women — Topista Kwikiriza, Tibiwa Irena and Safina Nakanyike, all from Uganda, and Fitina Nzeyimana from Burundi — allegedly escaped from the New Ark Mission of India (Home of Hope) near KRC Road in Dodda Gubbi between 3 am and 6 am on May 11 by breaking open a window.

An FIR was registered on May 15 based on a complaint filed by Srinivas N, manager of the shelter, after efforts to trace the women proved futile. According to the FIR, the New Ark Mission of India (Home of Hope), operational since 1998, houses foreign nationals as directed by the FRRO. The shelter houses 22 male and 18 female foreign nationals, brought there by police from various stations in Bengaluru.

Sources said an investigation is underway to trace the absconding women. The women, allegedly overstaying their visas, have been booked under relevant provisions of the Immigration and Foreigners Act.

90-day amnesty fetched 705 wildlife articles, trophies in 2024

Move halted after HC stay; matter in central list, say experts

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

A total of 705 wildlife articles and trophies were voluntarily surrendered to the state forest department by 192 individuals during the 90-day amnesty window announced by the government in 2024.

According to data accessed by *DH*, Bengaluru circle recorded the highest number of surrendered wildlife artifacts, receiving 385 trophies, followed by Canara circle with 117 items.

The surrendered articles included elephant tusks, tiger claws, antlers, gaur horns and pelts, mostly belonging to spotted deer and sambar deer.

Principal chief conservator of forests Kumar Pushkar informed *DH* that the recovered trophies had been placed at the respective circles for further investigation.

The government issued a notification under Wildlife (Protection and Surrender of Undeclared Wildlife or Animal Article, Trophy and Uncured Trophy) (Karnataka) Rules, 2024 on January 10, 2024, allowing people possessing wildlife trophies without valid ownership certificates to voluntarily hand them over to the department without facing prosecution.

The rules were introduced following widespread public criticism on social media over several celebrities allegedly possessing tiger-claw pendants and other wildlife-derived articles without proper legal documentation.

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre had then said that the move was aimed at encouraging compliance with wildlife protection laws and helping authorities identify illegally possessed wildlife articles.

Though the amnesty period was for 90 days, the government had to withdraw its notification following a stay order from the Karnataka High Court after two individuals approached the court, saying the notification impacted their cultural traditions.

Several traditional houses and temples in Kodagu region have wildlife trophies as part of their culture and heritage. Many of these are ancestral properties.

Kumar Pushkar explained that a few individuals had approached the HC seeking exemption from surrendering wildlife articles that lacked valid certificates.

"They wanted the forest department to give them permission and certificates to hold wildlife trophies passed down from ancestors. Unfortunately, there is no provision in law to allow holding of such trophies. Such possession is considered illegal," he said, adding that since the matter was still sub judice, the department was maintaining status quo.

Legal experts said the state government was not the authority to announce the amnesty period, as the central government, since the introduction of the Wildlife Protection Act in 1972, had given multiple opportunities, most recently in 2003, to surrender such articles.

Praveen Bhargav, trustee of Wildlife First and former member, National Board for Wildlife, says the newly inserted Section 42A in the Wildlife Act in 2022, only provides for surrender of animal articles/trophies which have been legally held under a certificate of ownership.

"It is clear that the intention of Parliament was not to provide an opportunity to facilitate surrender by those without a certificate of ownership".

Under the Wildlife Protection Act, possession of wildlife trophies and animal articles without valid certification is a punishable offence, and violators can face imprisonment of up to seven years along with fines exceeding Rs 25,000.

Minister Khandre told *DH* that the matter was sub judice.

"We received communication from the central government stating that the subject comes under the central list and states cannot grant amnesty. We were told that the central government will soon come up with a solution, so we are not pursuing the matter," he said.

The Trans Feminist Collective (TFC) was officially launched by (from left) co-founder Soumya, Ruth Manorama, president of the National Federation of Dalit Women and activist Akkai Padmashali in Bengaluru on Sunday.

Trans Feminist Collective launched, raises concerns over 2026 transgender law

BENGALURU, DHNS

TRANS FEMINIST COLLECTIVE

"Visibility without redistributive justice is not justice. Representation without transformation is not liberation.

The Trans Feminist Collective (TFC) was launched on Sunday to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), bringing together transgender activists, feminists, Dalit rights leaders, and a delegation from Nepal's Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) to build an intersectional movement for justice.

The launch event centered on criticism of the recently passed Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026, which speakers said dilutes the right to self-identification upheld by the Supreme Court in its landmark 2014 NALSA judgment.

Delivering the keynote address, Ruth Manorama, president of the National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW), said transgender, intersex and gender-non-conforming communities are integral to safeguarding democracy. She stressed that the fight for trans rights cannot be separated from anti-caste and feminist movements.

"When a community must repeatedly prove who they are to doctors and bureaucrats, dignity is replaced with suspicion," she said.

TFC co-founder Soumya invoked the egalitarian teachings of Basavanna and Akka Mahadevi, and argued that the 2026 Act deals a major setback to the community by recognising only Hijra identities within a restrictive religious framework, while ignoring the diversity of gender identities.

Another co-founder and activist, Akkai Padmashali, said the 2014 Supreme Court judgment had raised hopes within the community, but claimed that the new legislation had reversed many of those gains. She said the collective was formed to secure constitutional rights and ensure transgender participation in democratic decision-making.

The founders also highlighted the struggles faced by working class, Dalit and Adivasi transgender persons, saying many continue to face violence and exclusion from housing, education and healthcare, forcing some into begging and sex work for survival. "Visibility without redistributive justice is not justice. Representation without transformation is not liberation," the collective said.

Bus strike: Staff seek remedy by May 19 afternoon

Won't report for duty on May 20, if demands aren't met

BENGALURU, DHNS

Public transport services across Karnataka are likely to grind to a halt on May 20, as state transport corporation employees have threatened a statewide strike demanding a 25% salary hike and full settlement of pending wage arrears.

The unions have issued a strict deadline to the state government, demanding a resolution by the afternoon of May 19, failing which services in all four state-run transport corporations (KSRTC, BMTC, NWKRTC and KKRTC) will be withdrawn.

The unions have called for a stay-at-home protest. Employees plan to remain indoors and refuse to report for duty.

Demands

The dispute centres on delayed wage revisions, which are legally mandated every four years, but were deferred in 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic.

- 25% wage hike: Unions demand 25% salary increase retroactive from January 1, 2024, rejecting the government's offer of a 12.5% hike scheduled from April 2025.
- Full arrears settlement: While the government has agreed to pay back wages for 26 months, employees are demanding the arrears for full 38 months (totaling Rs 1,272 crore) in a single instalment.
- Allowance revision: The workers want a 31% dearness allowance (DA) merged into their basic pay, alongside hikes in daily bata and other allowances.

Union Minister of State for Railways V Somanna, BJP MPs P C Mohan and Lehar Singh Siroya among others flag off the new SMVT Bengaluru- LTT Mumbai Express train, in Bengaluru on Sunday. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw virtually flagged off the train from Delhi. PTI PHOTO

New B'luru-Mumbai train flagged off; Vande Bharat sleeper on the cards

BENGALURU, DHNS: Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Sunday virtually flagged off a new train service from SMVT Bengaluru–Lokmanya Tilak Terminus Express, Mumbai.

Speaking at the launch, Vaishnaw announced that Vande Bharat sleeper service on the Bengaluru–Mumbai route would also be launched shortly.

Reviewing the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project, Vaishnaw confirmed that work is underway across all 4 corridors. Land acquisition has been completed for Baiyappanahalli–Chikkabanavara and Heelalige–Rajanukunte corridors, and station construction has begun.

The KSR Bengaluru–Devanahalli alignment has been jointly approved by the state government and railways, with geotechnical surveys finished. Surveys for the recently approved Kengeri–Whitefield alignment will begin soon.

He said Karnataka now has 12 pairs of Vande Bharat trains. Testing on Bengaluru–Mangaluru route is underway to improve coastal connectivity up to Madgaon. Bullet train corridors connecting Bengaluru with Hyderabad and Chennai have been approved, with a vision to expand the network to 7,000 km.

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Banks can't assume the role of adjudicating authority to freeze accounts, rules HC

AMBARISH B
BENGALURU, DHNS

A bank, being a custodian of funds, cannot assume the role of an adjudicating authority and freeze accounts merely based on inter se disputes between rival factions, more so when the very locus of complainants to raise such dispute is under challenge, the high court has said.

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum said this while directing a bank to defreeze 8 savings accounts and 5 fixed deposit accounts of Sri Venkataramana Vidyavardhaka Sangha, an educational society based in Bantwal, Dakshina Kannada.

The society said Canara Bank debit-froze its accounts after certain individuals, who claimed to be members of the society, filed a complaint alleging irregularities.

The issue as to whether the complainants are lawful members and whether they could have set the law in motion is itself sub judice and yet to be adjudicated by the deputy registrar of cooperative societies.

Justice Magadum said ordinarily, debit-freezing accounts can be justified only when it is backed by authority of law, either at the instance of an investigating agency in connection with a cognizable offence or pursuant to an order passed by a competent court of law.

"Such freezing, which has the effect of paralysing the functioning of an educational institution, could have been justified only upon a lawful directive emanating from a competent authority exercising statutory powers, and not on the basis of unverified allegations in an intra-society dispute. Hence, the debit-freezing action, being dehors the statutory framework and in disregard of judicial directions governing the field, is unsustainable and liable to be interfered with," the judge said.

The court said that the bank's action was clearly arbitrary and amounted to an overreach without any lawful sanction.

"The power to freeze or attach bank accounts is a drastic measure, which has serious civil consequences, particularly when exercised against an educational society, whose functioning necessarily involves continuous financial transactions for salaries, maintenance and academic activities. Such coercive action cannot be resorted to in a casual or mechanical manner," it said.

However, the court clarified that the society shall operate the accounts strictly subject to outcome of the enquiry proceedings pending before the deputy registrar and that the enquiry proceedings shall be binding on the parties.

'B'luru kids feeding on processed food at risk of lifestyle diseases'

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

A 2025 Lancet series on ultra-processed foods warned that India is witnessing one of the fastest rises in packaged food consumption, especially among children and urban families, contributing to hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

In a city like Bengaluru, where dependence on processed food among kids is high, the consequences are also much greater, doctors noted.

Speaking about sodium consumption in children, Dr Sandeep S Reddy, Consultant, Department of General Medicine, said: "Parents severely underestimate the sodium hidden in seemingly innocent, non-salty staple foods. A single slice of whole-wheat bread can contain up to 230 milligrams of sodium, while a peanut butter sandwich contributes nearly 500 mg from the bread alone. Similarly, breakfast cereals and biscuits can contain 200-300 mg of sodium per serving."

According to the United States Dietary Guidelines, children aged 4–8 should consume less than 1,500 milligrams and teenagers should consume less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium daily.

"Nearly 90% of children exceed the daily sodium limits, with average intake reaching 3,330 to 3,393 milligrams. Teenage boys in particular consume nearly 4,000 mg daily, far exceeding safe levels," said Dr Reddy.

"In an alarming trend, children as young as 10 or 12 are being diagnosed with conditions previously reserved for middle-aged adults. Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatotic Liver Disease is becoming common in overweight children due to high fructose intake, while Type 2 Diabetes is increasingly prevalent in adolescents. Hypertension and early dyslipidemia linked to high salt intake from packaged snacks are also leading to elevated blood pressure levels in school-aged children," said Dr Sahana Shankar, Consultant Paediatric Gastroenterologist.

Along with unhealthy food habits, sedentary lifestyles are worsening obesity among children.

Dr Jyothi Raghuram, Senior Consultant - General Paediatrics and Paediatric Rheumatology, said, "The sedentary lifestyle and increasing chances of hypertension and insulin resistance are showing up in the form of rashes in the neck, armpits and groin areas along with increased weight for age. Uncontrolled hypertension may even result in seizures requiring ICU treatment."

Govt's role

Doctors also stressed the need for stronger government regulation.

Although processed foods mention sodium levels on labels, the information is often too technical for most people to understand.

"India should introduce stricter sodium rules for foods marketed to children, as many packaged snacks, instant noodles, chips and fast foods contain excessive salt. Schools should also restrict such foods on campuses, while clear warning labels and advertising rules can encourage companies to make healthier products," said Dr Parimala V Thirumalesh, Lead Senior Consultant - Neonatology and Paediatrics.

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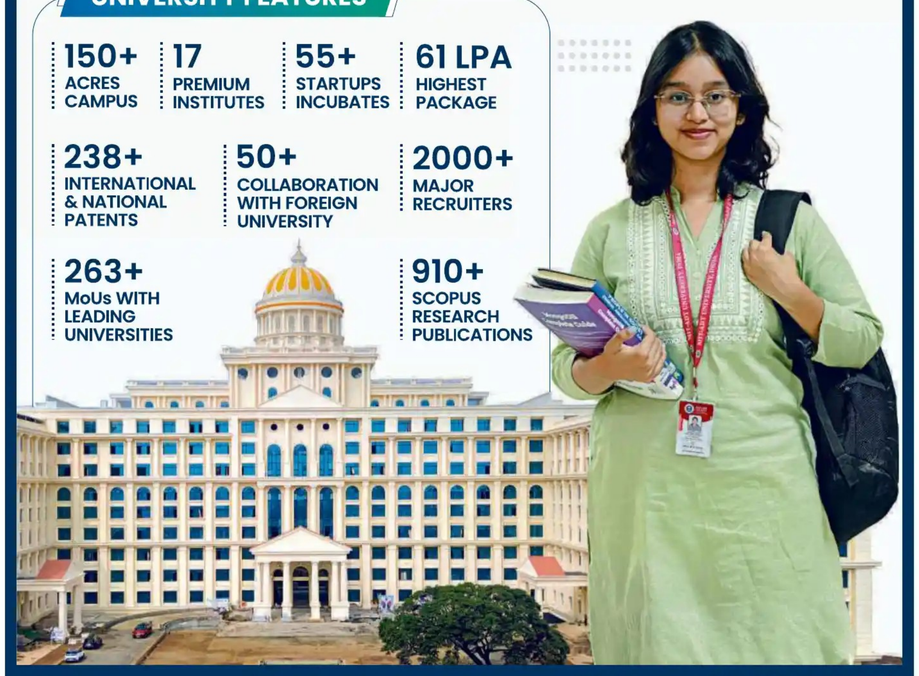

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142 govt schools shut in U-K over 17 years

KARWAR, DHNS: As many as 142 government schools in the border district of Uttara Kannada (U-K) have been shut in the past seventeen years. In addition to parents enrolling their children in private schools in the district, some are sending their kids to private institutions in neighbouring Goa.

Kannada-medium schools that were once the solitary educational institutions in small idyllic villages in Karwar and Joida taluks are among those that have had to be closed down owing to parents' shifting priorities.

While 31 schools in Karwar taluk, which borders Goa, have shut down, the shutters have come down on 14 schools in Joida.

A senior official in the Education Department lamented the downward spiral in enrolment at government schools in Uttara Kannada district over the past decade-and-a-half. "The situation has only worsened in the past five years. Nearly 45% of the schools that have been shut recorded zero enrolment," the official said.

Social activist Kishan Kamble pointed out that many people in villages bordering Goa such as Maajali, Sadashivagad and Asnoti in Karwar, and Digli in Joida were either migrating to Goa in search of work, or were sending their children to private schools in the neighbouring state.

"Parents are enrolling their children at schools in Lolem and other nearby places in Goa. Parents working in Goa seem to prefer enrolling their children in schools there impacting admissions to both government and government-aided schools in the border district," Kamble said.

Top 11 temples earn Rs 602 cr in 2025-26, up Rs 45 cr yr-on-yr

After all expenses, they get to save Rs 70 cr

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

Eleven major temples under the state's endowment (Muzrai) department have collected over Rs 602 crore in donations in the 2025-26 financial year, nearly Rs 45 crore more than the previous year. After all expenditures, the temples have saved Rs 70.43 crore.

Kukke Subrahmanya temple in Dakshina Kannada district continues to get the highest collection among all temples, with Rs 168 crore, nearly Rs 12 crore more than the previous.

Of the Rs 168 crore collected from devotees, the temple management has spent Rs 85 crore on various rituals, salaries of staff and maintenance of temple.

Kukke Subrahmanya temple in Dakshina Kannada district clocked the highest collection, with Rs 168 crore, nearly Rs 12 crore more than the previous year.

Male Mahadeshwara temple in Kollegal taluk of Chamarajanagar district received the second highest donations in the state with Rs 118 crore.

However, this is slightly lower than the previous year's collection of Rs 123 crore. The trustees of the temple have spent Rs 16 crore of the total collection this year.

Except Male Mahadeshwara temple, all others attached to the Muzrai department have received higher donations than the previous year.

Karnataka has 205 grade-A temples (whose annual income is above Rs 25 lakh), 193 grade-B temples (annual income above Rs 5 lakh) and 34,168 grade-C temples with annual income less than Rs five lakh.

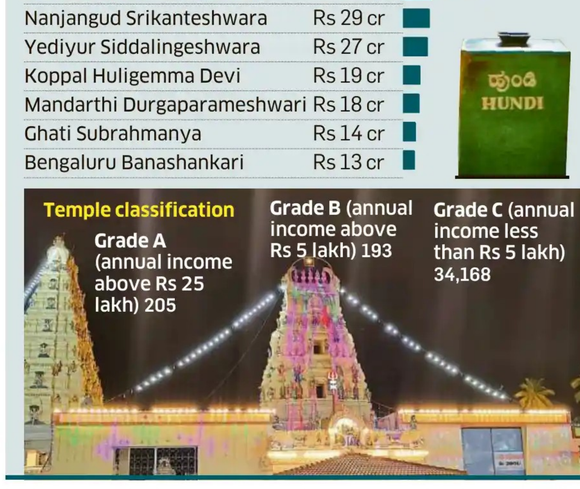
Nagaratna Cholin, Muzrai department tahsildar at Renukadevi Yellamma temple, which received the fifth highest donations this year, says implementation of free bus service for women (Shakti scheme) had vastly increased the footfall at the temple.

"Earlier, only one section of people used to visit this temple. However, after the implementation of the Shakti scheme, people from across the society are coming to the temple. As most of the women are benefiting from free bus service, they are using the money saved to give offerings to the deity," she said.

Muzrai Minister Ramalinga Reddy told *DH* that all donations to the temples were spent on overall development and rituals of the temples. Not a single paisa from these temples was spent for any other purposes, he said.

DEITIES AND DONATIONS Collection in 2025-26

Kukke Subrahmanya	Rs 168 cr
Male Mahadeshwara	Rs 118 cr
Kollur Mookambika	Rs 84 cr
Mysuru Chamundeshwari	Rs 80 cr
Savadatti Renuka Yallamma	Rs 31 cr
Nanjangud Srikanteshwara	Rs 29 cr
Yediyur Siddalingeshwara	Rs 27 cr
Koppal Huligemma Devi	Rs 19 cr
Mandarthi Durgaparameshwari	Rs 18 cr
Ghati Subrahmanya	Rs 14 cr
Bengaluru Banashankari	Rs 13 cr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HUNDI
Temple classification
Grade A (annual income above Rs 25 lakh) 205
Grade B (annual income above Rs 5 lakh) 193
Grade C (annual income less than Rs 5 lakh) 34,168

GSI proposes to search for lithium in Raichur forest

State authorities say project requires tree felling

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

About 510 acres of forest land in the arid heartland of north Karnataka have come under focus after the Geological Survey of India (GSI) sought to look for lithium deposits in the area.

The land is part of the Amareshwara block forest, an undulating area, where the GSI will drill 37 bore holes of four-inch diameter.

The survey will involve felling 941 trees, with the GSI agreeing to pay for the subsequent afforestation.

The regional empowered committee of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, which looked into the project, sought to know whether it was possible to avoid felling of the trees during the survey.

State authorities, however, said felling was required for laying roads and other works.

The committee pointed to the guidelines issued under the amended Forest (Conservation) Act and said 110 "tall trees" shall be planted for each borehole. The project will involve raising a plantation of 4,070 tall trees in the degraded forest land.

The proposal was deferred in view of the lack of clarity on some points. The committee expressed concern that for a prospecting proposal involving drilling, the inclusion of a large forest area (510 acre) was misleading. It noted that non-forest activities were not being taken up in the entire 510 acres, but only a small fraction of it.

GSI clarified that while the bore holes are spread over approximately 500 acres, the actual area involved in drilling was 10.26 acres. For this, the regional authority suggested that the proposal should be limited to the actual impacted area.

Interestingly, the GSI told the committee that the soil and moisture conservation works may not be insisted upon by the committee.

"It is opined that this prospecting proposal will ultimately lead to mining operations in the future and hence taking soil and moisture conservation works as part of this prospecting proposal may not serve the purpose in the long run," the committee noted.

The committee directed the nodal officer to scrutinise the proposal and resubmit it with correct data regarding the forest area required. It also asked the state authorities to justify the construction of permanent roads at the stage of prospection of minerals and provide a specific time period needed to conduct the works.

India, Netherlands reset strategic ties

Netherlands, from Page 1

Since the Cold War years, India–Netherlands defence engagement remained restrained amid New Delhi's concerns over Dutch military supplies to Pakistan, particularly in the naval sector.

Pakistan's navy acquired Dutch-origin platforms and technologies over the decades, including mine countermeasure vessels, offshore patrol ships, radar systems and submarine-related expertise.

In 2022, the Netherlands transferred two retired Alkmaar-class minehunters — HNLMS Haarlem and HNLMS Middelburg — to Pakistan, strengthening Islamabad's naval inventory and renewing Indian apprehensions over European military support to its rival.

The issue came up during Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's discussions with his then Dutch counterpart Ruben Brekelmans in New Delhi in March 2025.

'Military exports to Pak'

Singh conveyed New Delhi's unease over military exports to Pakistan and stressed that nations seeking closer strategic ties with India should avoid supplying defence equipment or sensitive technologies to countries that support terrorism and destabilise the region.

India, however, is looking to expand defence cooperation with the Netherlands in areas such as naval shipbuilding, submarine technologies, underwater surveillance systems, mine countermeasure capabilities, radar and sensor technologies, maritime domain awareness and high-end electronics.

Dutch expertise in naval engineering, semiconductor equipment and dual-use technologies are also seen as valuable for India's broader push towards defence modernisation and indigenous manufacturing, sources in New Delhi told *DH*.

During their meeting, Modi and Jetten expressed deep concern over the situation in West Asia, noting its serious implications for the region and the wider world. They expressed hope for lasting peace in the region.

The leaders also called for freedom of navigation and unimpeded flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz, opposing any restrictive measures on the maritime traffic.

Modi and Jetten welcomed the ceasefire between Iran and the US, underscoring the importance of de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy.

"The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has resulted in high energy prices. As in the Netherlands, the impact on India has been severe too," Jetten said after meeting Modi. "So, it's vital that this conflict be ended and that a lasting solution be found."

Indo-Dutch dairy training centre in B'luru

NEW DELHI, DHNS: An Indo-Dutch Centre of Excellence on Training in Dairy will be opened at the Centre of Excellence for Animal Husbandry (CEAH) in Bengaluru, India and the Netherlands agreed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to The Hague.

Modi and the Dutch Prime Minister, Rob Jetten, witnessed the signing of a joint declaration in this regard, according to a joint statement issued after the meeting between the two leaders.

CLONED IN CLAY

An artist gives a live demonstration on making a clay sculpture at 'Art Park,' an event organised by University College of Visual Arts in Davangere on Sunday.
DH PHOTO/SATISH BADIGER

Regularising deviations in B'luru...

Building violations, from Page 1

For instance, a 2,000 sq ft plot carrying an FAR of 1.75 can accommodate up to 3,500 sq ft of built-up area.

Considering the relaxation of 15% in deviation limits, the plot owner can increase the built-up area by an additional 525 square feet. That would amount to a penalty of Rs 26.25 lakh.

On the face of it, the fee appears steep, especially after taking into consideration the additional construction cost. However, it may still appear attractive for plots situated along wide roads and in prime areas where property prices exceed Rs 10,000 per square foot.

Some believe that the regularisation scheme is nothing but a revenue-generating exercise by the state government for the civic bodies.

Suhas Ananth Rajkumar, a resident of CV Raman Nagar who has been fighting against unauthorised constructions in his neighbourhood, said the government is committing a big blunder by enforcing the relaxations to generate revenue.

"The revenue the corporations will need to undo the damage will be much higher. This may seem like easy money, but densification will also put stress on existing amenities. The cost of relaying water and sewage lines, along with upgrading other civic infrastructure, will be significant," he said.

There is also a fear that property owners may deviate more than 15% of the sanctioned plan, which in many instances is as high as 50%, and still seek regularisation under this scheme.

Man, sons drown in farm pond

MALUR (KOLAR DISTRICT), DHNS: A man and his two sons met a watery grave in a farm pond in Nakkanahalli in Malur taluk, Kolar on Sunday.

Srinivas (45) and his two sons, Chethan (15) and nine-year-old Rajesh, had been to the pond on a farm land for a swim.

The two children reportedly got into the pond first, and Srinivas is learnt to have followed them. Srinivas, who did not know swimming, plunged in its depths. His two children, neither of whom knew how to swim too drowned in the pond.

Masti police visited the spot and registered a case.

Villagers said that the agriculture department provides financial assistance for construction of farm ponds. They demanded that assistance should be provided for erecting a fence around the pond. They said that the officials of the agriculture department should educate farmers in this regard.

'Silent' cybercrime APK fraud spikes...

Cybercrime, From Page 1

Once installed, they mostly remain hidden.

"Cybercriminals purchase these customizable APK kits and use them as per their need. One day, the message may be about banking, the next day it may be about a friend's wedding. They will also use any major news events to alter the messages. If a known contact's phone is compromised, it will automatically forward the malicious APK file to all their contacts and WhatsApp groups. Victims click, thinking the message is from a known person," a senior cybercrime investigator in Bengaluru told *DH*.

Once they have access, fraudsters intercept OTPs to transfer funds from bank accounts. But the threat also goes beyond a financial loss. "When an APK file containing malware like a Remote Access Trojan (RAT) infects a mobile phone, they have complete access to the data and files, including call logs, messages, documents, photographs, videos, etc. With spyware-laced APKs, they can even remotely access the camera and microphones," another senior officer in Bengaluru claimed.

Sr citizens most affected

Case trends analysed by *DH* showed that most of the victims tend to be senior citizens and those with minimal tech knowledge, though devices have also been compromised by children accidentally clicking on the files on their parents' phones.

While police will attempt to trace the lost funds, prevention is key. "Modern Android operating systems have a fail-safe: 'Install from Unknown Sources'. Public should ensure they don't click on this option even after accidentally clicking on an APK file, as it will allow the malware to be installed," the senior officer quoted above said.

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3 killed in lightning strikes as thunderstorm batters N-K, coastal dists

BENGALURU, DHNS

Three people, including a woman, were killed and as many injured in lightning strikes in Kittur and Kalyana Karnataka districts as heavy rains, accompanied by thunder, lightning and gusty winds continued to lash the regions on Sunday.

The evening showers have brought the temperatures down giving some much-needed respite for the people in many areas of north Karnataka.

Rainwater gushes into Raghavendra Swami Mutt in Shikaripura following heavy rain on Saturday night.

Motor vehicles navigate a flooded Indira Glass House Road in Hubballi on Sunday.

Hubballi-Dharwad twin cities experienced heavy showers, coupled with heightened thunder and lightning activity, in the evening. Skies opened up at 4 pm and it poured for the next two hours bringing life to a standstill.

Jayashree Sirasangi (29) was struck dead by lightning while her husband Hanumanthappa Sirasangi sustained severe burns in the incident. The incident occurred when they were working at their farm at Kalageri on the outskirts of Dharwad.

Gadag-Betageri and several parts of the district experienced downpour coupled with gusty winds. Several bikes and cars parked outside the houses were damaged in tree fall incidents in Gadag. The sharp spell of rain left farmlands at Kurthkoti, Shygoti. Dundur and Hulakoti in Gadag taluk flooded.

Vehicular movement on Gajendragad-Naregal road was hit after a wind turbine tower fell on the road near Gaddihall stream. Heavy showers infused life into several streams in Gadag taluk.

Kalyana Karnataka districts also saw thundershowers on Sunday. Kariyappa Ayyappa Ganakihaal (48) was killed in a lightning strike while Basavaraj suffered injuries at Komalapur village near Mudgal of Raichur district.

A haystack belonging to a farmer from Megalapete was gutted in a fire triggered by a lightning strike. Over a dozen electricity poles were uprooted in Mudgal and surrounding villages affecting the power supply.

A portion of a spectator gallery of the taluk stadium at Jewargi collapsed following rain and strong winds that lashed the town on Sunday.

Pre-monsoon showers have hit normal life in the coastal towns of Uttara Kannada district.

Bhatkal and Honnavar in particular, received a relentless battering of thunderstorms. Vinayak Kharvi (38), a fisherman, was killed in a lightning strike while he was fishing near Apsarakonda beach. Two tourists are said to have suffered minor burns in a lightning strike near the beach.

Meanwhile, a 35-year-old man from Mudashirali in Bhatkal taluk sustained serious injuries after an electricity pole fell on him while he was riding a scooter.

Heavy rains also lashed Dandeli, Joida and Mundgod in the evening. Several houses have been damaged in the tree fall incidents.

Crops including paddy, papaya, areca on 622 acres have been damaged in the Saturday night rain in Davangere district with Channagiri taluk taking the maximum hit.

Heavy overnight rains left the Raghavendraswamy Temple near Huchuraya Swamy lake in Shikaripura town, Shivamogga district.

Rainwater mixed with sewage gushed into the shops and houses in the low-lying areas of the town.

Zinc sheets and iron angulars of the auditorium of the government PU college in Ripponpet of Shivamogga district were blown away in the storm that lashed the town late Saturday evening.

The pre-monsoon showers are likely to continue for next two to three days in north and south interior Karnataka and parts of Malnad and coastal districts, according to the weather department.

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Rainfall occurred at most places over Coastal; at a few places over South Interior and at isolated places over North Interior Karnataka.
Forecast May 18: Partly Cloudy sky becoming generally cloudy sky towards afternoon. Light rain/ thundershowers likely.

INTERIOR NORTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	36.0	23.6	0.0
Bidar	40.8	26.2	0.0
Vijayapura	40.0	26.0	0.0
Dharwad	37.0	22.0	0.0
Haveri	36.4	20.8	46.4
Kalaburagi	42.5	27.8	0.0
Raichur	40.6	27.4	0.0
COASTAL			
Honnavar	33.4	22.1	14.0
Karwar	33.8	26.8	0.0
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	31.4	23.6	3.7

INTERIOR SOUTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	30.3	21.7	2.0
Bengaluru	32.0	22.6	0.0
Ballari	NA	NA	NA
Chamarajanagar	--	--	--
Chikkamagaluru	--	--	--
Chitradurga	35.1	21.7	0.0
Davangere	35.0	20.5	4.4
Hassan	--	--	--
Mysuru	32.0	19.2	0.0
Madikeri	--	--	--
Kolar	35.8	22.6	0.0

OTHER STATIONS

New Delhi	43.0	32.0	NIL
Kolkata	38.0	29.0	NIL
Mumbai	33.0	30.0	NA
Chennai	35.0	30.0	NA
Pune	41.0	25.0	NA
Hyderabad	38.0	28.0	NA
Th'puram	31.0	27.0	NIL

Sri SIDDARAMAIAH
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka

KARNATAKA TRANSPORT THREE YEARS JOURNEY OF PROGRESS

Sri D.K. SHIVAKUMAR
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka

Induction of New Buses

Approval accorded for induction of **7800** new buses Inducted **5998** buses (KSRTC-**1286** (EV Bus- **50**), BMTC-**2329** (EV Bus- **1730**), NWKRTC-**1210**, KKRTC-**1173**)

Guarantee
Journey towards women empowerment
740 Crores
FREE TICKETS
Rs.19349.26
Crores Value

Project Majestic

Plan initiated for construction of **'Transport Hub'** in Bengaluru Majestic Bus Station under Public and Private Partnership

SALARY REVISION

Salary hike of **12.5%** for **1.05** lakh employees, Additional expenditure of ₹ **72.80** crore per month and ₹ **873.64** crore per year for the four transport corporations

MARCH 2023 SALARY REVISION ARREARS

Approval has been given for ₹ **1,271.92** crore towards arrears payment of salary revision and the first installment of ₹ **450** crore has been released

National and International Awards for State Road Transport Corporations

1997-2026	May 2023 - May2026
694	**245**

Women's ridership under the Shakti Scheme has entered the world records

BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT WORKS

Initiated construction of Bus Terminal at Mysuru City at a cost of ₹ **120** Cr. I Construction of bus stations in Belgaum, Hubli and Dharwad I **31** Bus Terminals I **12** Bus Depots I Charging stations for electric vehicles at **12** locations/Depots I **10** Staff Quarters and **02** Training Centres were constructed / upgraded across the state I Under the **Smart City Mission,** bus stations at Belgaum, Tumakuru (Phase 1), Davanagere and Betur Road have been redeveloped

KSRTC AROGYA

Health treatment at **280+** Empanelled Hospitals for employees and their dependants, unlimited cashless medical treatment, till date **1,86,973** Claims and ₹ **55.02** Crore I Medical reimbursement ₹ **16** Cr. per annum

NEW RECRUITMENT

Recruited **10497** staff–Direct recruitment of **9000** and **1497** appointments completed on compassionate ground

BUS REFURBISHING

2109 buses refurbished

BUS TRIPS

Daily Bus trips increased from **154955** to **186506**

DHWANI SPANDANA

A friendly initiative for **visually challenged passengers**

BUS BRANDING

Ashwamedha I Pallakki I Ambaari Utsav I Kalyana Ratha I Airavat Club Class 2.0 I Amoghavarsha I Raja Ratha

SARIGE SURAKSHA / FAMILY WELFARE INSURANCE SCHEME

Compensation paid ₹ **1 Cr.** / ₹ **50** lakh/ ₹ **30** lakh to the dependents of the deceased employees during accident (on duty / off duty) of ₹ **66.50** Crore I Compensation increased from ₹ **3** lakh to ₹ **14** lakh for other than accidental deaths. Total paid ₹ **93.28** Crore

SRI JAYADEVA INSTITUTE OF CARDIOVASCULAR SCIENCES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE

18,758 Heart check-up of staff, Open Heart Surgery for **10** staff and implanted stunt for **42** staff, treatment worth ₹ **50.56** Lakhs

SARIGE MITRA (HRMS 2.0)

Transparency/uniformity in employees leave and attendance, comprehensive services records, EPF Information.

TRAINING

Effective Training Action Plan initiated and **33482** staff trained during the last one year

SARIGE VIDYA CHETHANA / VIDYA SPOORTHI

Scholarship amount increased for children of the employees and distributed ₹ **4.25** Crore

DIGITAL INITIATIVES

AWATAR 4.0 with UPI Digital payment in buses I **52**% UPI payments I Inventory Management (E-Ugrana) I 'Namma BMTC' mobile app I Land Beat App I E-Vanijya I Vayuvya Snehi I Namma Kalaburagi I Accident Management Software I E-Malige I Nyaya Patha

Sri Ramalinga Reddy, Hon'ble Minister, Transport and Muzrai issued the appointment order for the newly appointed crew

MOBILE WORKSHOP / METRO FEEDER SERVICE

Emergency Accident Response Vehicle I Mobile workshops deployed I **241** Metro feeder buses I **12** Package Tours I **142** Express I **33** Nice Road Services I **10292** daily additional trips

KARNATAKA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATIONS

ACCOMPLISHED AS PROMISED

As enshrined in our Constitution, - to safeguard public property and to abjure violence is the fundamental duty of every citizen of India.

BJP sets 13-point Kerala agenda, focuses on OBC outreach

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PTI: Buoyed by its victory in three seats in the April 9 Kerala Assembly elections, the BJP has unveiled a 13-point political agenda that it said would shape its strategy in the state ahead of the next Lok Sabha elections.

The agenda places a clear focus on consolidating support among Hindu backward communities while recalibrating the party's outreach to minority groups.

The agenda was part of a political resolution adopted at a BJP state core committee meeting held on Saturday and chaired by state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar, a party source said.

According to the source, the party's document does not explicitly outline fresh outreach initiatives towards minority communities, particularly Christians, despite earlier attempts to build closer ties with the community ahead of the Assembly elections.

Those efforts, however, were not sustained for various reasons, the source added. Regarding minority outreach, the source stated that the party has not discontinued its engagement with the Christian community, noting that its members continue to hold organisational positions in several districts.

Fresh faces, old equations shape Kerala's new UDF Cabinet

Venugopal camp gains edge in ministry formation

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

A 21-member Cabinet of the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) — headed by Chief Minister V D Satheesan — will be sworn in in Kerala on Monday.

Loyalists of AICC general secretary KC Venugopal, who was one of the contenders for the CM's post, seem to have got an upper hand in the selection of Cabinet members.

Senior leader Ramesh Chennithala, another contender for the top post, is likely to be allotted the key Home portfolio.

The majority of the Cabinet, including Satheesan, are first-time ministers. They include two women, Bindu Krishna and KA Thulasi of the Congress. Thulasi is the wife of Congress MP VK Sreekandan.

Among the five seats given to the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), one will be shared by two MLAs on a two-and-a-half-year basis. There could also be a seat-sharing arrangement among parties with one MLA each.

Satheesan said there was no pressure from any leaders in Cabinet formation and that there was no group-wise seat-sharing.

He also said many eligible candidates could not be included in the Cabinet as social and regional balance had to be maintained.

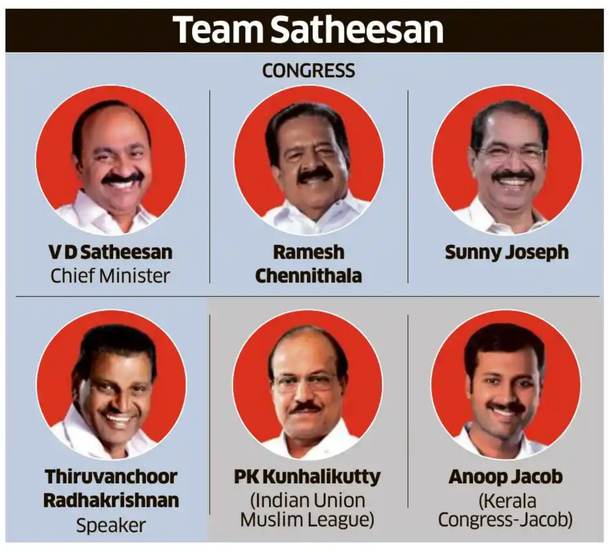
Discussions on portfolio allocation are in the final stages, he said. It is learnt that the CM will hold the Finance portfolio.

Resentment over a lack of regional and community-based representation in the Cabinet is emerging. The Latin Catholic Church has already flagged the issue.

Satheesan said that it was after six decades that the entire Cabinet of a Congress-led government was being sworn in together.

Top Congress leaders, including party president Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, Deputy CM DK Sivakumar, Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy, and Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, are expected to attend the ceremony.

Tamil Nadu CM C Joseph Vijay and several other prominent leaders are also expected to visit Kerala in the coming days, he said.



Popular decisions likely

All eyes are on the first Cabinet meeting, to be held on Monday. A host of popular measures — like free rides for women in state transport corporation buses and increasing the honorarium of ASHA workers — are expected from it.

As part of the austerity measures, it was already decided not to unnecessarily buy new vehicles and to do only a minimum maintenance work of official residences of the chief minister and ministers.

The acute financial crunch remains a key challenge for the new government. Several government employees are set to retire this month, adding to the fiscal burden.

Govt ordinance raises SC judge strength to 37

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

JUDICIAL BOOST

- The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, was signed by President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday.
- Article 123 empowers the President to promulgate ordinances on Cabinet's recommendation.
- Centre needs to get it passed in Parliament within 6 months

The government has promulgated an ordinance to immediately increase the number of Supreme Court judges from 33 to 37, days after the Union Cabinet decided to introduce a bill in Parliament.

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, was signed by President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday, according to a notification published in the official gazette.

The ordinance states, "In Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956, for the word 'thirty-three', the word 'thirty-seven' shall be substituted." This excludes the Chief Justice of India.

The Union Cabinet on May 5 approved the proposal to introduce the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, in Parliament to raise the number of judges in the apex court.

Article 123 empowers the President to promulgate ordinances on the recommendation of the Union Cabinet when Parliament is in recess, if satisfied that circumstances exist requiring immediate action.

However, the ordinance will lapse if the government fails to get it passed in Parliament within six months, or within six weeks of Parliament's reassembly. With the monsoon session likely in July, the urgency behind bringing the ordinance now was not immediately clear.

The government earlier said that raising the number of judges would enable the Supreme Court to function more efficiently and effectively, ensuring speedy justice.

While the Constitution allowed for a Chief Justice and seven other judges, the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act 1956 provided for increasing the number to 10.

The number was further increased to 13 by the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1960, and to 17 by the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1977.

The working strength of the Supreme Court of India was, however, restricted to 15 judges by the Cabinet, excluding the Chief Justice of India, till the end of 1979, when the restriction was withdrawn at the request of the Chief Justice of India.

'No jealousy against Vijay, meet with Stalin friendship call'

CHENNAI, PTI: Rajinikanth on Sunday denied he was "jealous" of Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay and clarified that his recent meeting with DMK president M K Stalin was "purely" a friendship call and not done with any political motive.

Rajinikanth

Talking to reporters at his residence here, the top star made it clear that the meeting with the former CM Stalin was not an attempt to hinder Vijay's chief ministerial aspirations or merge political parties.

Dismissing that he had any envy towards TVK founder and CM Vijay, he said there was a 25-year generational gap between him and the CM and commended Vijay's impressive achievements at a young age, which he said surpassed even those of the legendary MGR (MG Ramachandran) and NTR (N T Rama Rao).

MGR and NTR, the two matinee idols from Tamil and Telugu cinema, had gone on to become CM of Tamil Nadu and the then undivided Andhra Pradesh, respectively.

"I have seen Vijay since a young age. Why would I be jealous if he had become CM. That too at a young age of 52, he has achieved more than MGR and NTR... I have no envy at all," he added.

PM Narendra Modi with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and his Swedish counterpart Ulf Kristersson in Gothenburg, Sweden. PTI

FTA to unlock new opportunities: PM

Modi also holds talks to deepen trade, tech ties with Sweden

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Free Trade Agreement between India and the European Union will unlock new opportunities for industries, investors and innovators, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in Gothenburg on Sunday, as Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, vowed to sign the deal by the end of this year and operationalise it "at record speed".

She also said the EU would move fast to ink an investment agreement with India.

"We are committed to signing the agreement by the end of the year and making it fully operational at record speed," von der Leyen said, adding, "The trade agreement opened the door; an investment agreement walks us through this door".

She joined Modi and Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in Gothenburg to address journalists just before a meeting of the industry leaders of Europe.

India and the EU announced the conclusion of the negotiations for the FTA on January 27 when Modi hosted von der Leyen and the European Council president António Luís Santos da Costa.

The prime ministers of India and Sweden discussed ways to deepen cooperation in trade and investment, technology and innovation, green transition, space, emerging technologies, defence and security, SMEs, research and people-to-people ties. The bilateral trade reached $7.75 billion in 2025.

Commemorating Tagore

Modi and Kristersson also exchanged special commemorative gifts to celebrate the legacy of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

Kristersson gifted Modi a box containing two replicas of hand-written epigrams by Tagore, accompanied by a small explanatory text and a photograph of the polymath taken in 1921 during his visit to Sweden. Modi presented Kristersson a set of collected works of Tagore and a specially handcrafted bag from Shantiniketan.

CBSE cuts re-evaluation fees amid on-screen marking row

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Sunday slashed re-evaluation and answer sheet verification fees for Class 12 amid concerns over On-screen Marking System (OMS), which was introduced during the recently conducted examinations.

The fee for re-evaluation with access to answer scripts was Rs 700 and that for only re-evaluation was Rs 500. Now, both will cost students Rs 100, said Secondary Education Secretary Sanjay Kumar. If marking is found to be erroneous, students will get the refund.

The fees for re-evaluating a single question and checking an answer remain unchanged at Rs 100 and Rs 25, respectively.

Addressing the media on Sunday, Kumar justified introducing OMS, saying 98 lakh answer papers were scanned to PDF and went through three levels of security, and that, only 13,000 papers were illegible and marked manually.

SANJAY KUMAR
School Education Secretary, Ministry of Education

> Earlier, when the CBSE conducted evaluation or marking, it was generally done within the geographical jurisdiction of the respective regional offices. However, with OSM, it has now become possible to have answer sheets evaluated even outside the regional office area.

"During the scanning process, three levels of security were maintained. This was necessary because while scanning, it had to be ensured that the quality of scanning is proper and that no page is missed in the process, and that the scanning had to be complete as well as legible. After this process, the security coding and numbering of the answer sheets were checked so that the answer sheets could be sent anywhere securely," Kumar said.

Kumar was accompanied by CBSE Chairperson Rahul Singh and Controller of Examinations Sanyam Bhardwaj at the press meet.

'Eliminates errors'

Kumar said OSM brings in transparency and eliminates errors in totalling marks. He added that earlier, CBSE conducted evaluation or marking generally within the geographical jurisdiction of the respective regional offices. Now, answer sheets can be evaluated even outside the regional office's area. "This has brought greater transparency and objectivity into the evaluation process," he added.

The secondary education body has been facing heat over the new system, with criticisms coming in that the pass percentage fell due to the checking (from 88% last year to 85% this year) and that both teachers and students were not given enough time and resources to prepare for it.

Kumar said OSM was initially introduced in 2014, but was discontinued due to technical issues.

Kolkata demolition protest turns violent, 3 cops injured

KOLKATA, PTI: A protest against the recent bulldozer action in Kolkata's Tiljala turned violent on Sunday as demonstrators hurled stones at police personnel in the minority-dominated Park Circus area, injuring at least three officials and damaging several vehicles.

The flare-up came days after bulldozers rolled into Tiljala as part of the West Bengal government's demolition drive against alleged illegal constructions following the factory fire that killed two persons earlier this week.

On Sunday afternoon, a large number of people gathered near Park Circus Seven Point Crossing to protest against the anti-encroachment drive and attempted to block roads, police said.

As police tried to disperse, what they described as an "unlawful assembly", a section of protesters allegedly resorted to stone-pelting, triggering chaos in the area.

Several vehicles parked along the roadside, including those carrying central forces, were vandalised, officials said.

Heavy deployment of police and central forces was made in the area after the clashes.

Flames and smoke billow after a fire broke out in an AC coach of the Thiruvananthapuram-Hazrat Nizamuddin Rajdhani Express in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam district on Sunday. While no casualties were reported in the fire, a van carrying repair and other equipment to the site later overturned in the district, injuring five railway staffers. PTI

Uncertainty clouds May 22 Centre-Ladakh talks

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

Less than a week before the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)'s proposed talks with Ladakh's civil-society groups in the strategically sensitive region bordering China and Pakistan, the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) say they are yet to receive formal invitations or an agenda for the meeting.

LAB co-chairman Chering Dorjay Lakruk said no formal communication had been received so far despite the May 22 meeting drawing close.

Ladakh L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena announced the talks ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Ladakh on April 30 and May 1.

The uncertainty has renewed concerns within Ladakh's political and civil-society circles over the Union government's seriousness and pace on the region's long-pending demands — including statehood, Sixth Schedule status, a separate Public Service Commission, and safeguards for land and jobs.

The proposed meeting assumes significance as it comes after months of protests and political mobilisation in Ladakh, including climate activist Sonam Wangchuk's fasts and campaigns demanding constitutional protections for the ecologically fragile and strategically important Himalayan region. Ladakh was carved out as a Union Territory after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. While the move was initially welcomed in Leh, concerns later emerged over constitutional safeguards for local identity, land, and employment.

20-YEAR WAIT

Kerala mom to reunite with son jailed in Saudi

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

Nearly two decades of waiting for an elderly woman in Kozhikode, Kerala, to see her son imprisoned in Saudi Arabia is finally coming to an end.

Abdul Rahim, a native of Feroke in Kozhikode, was convicted in 2006 for the killing of a differently-abled child in Saudi Arabia. Though initially sentenced to death, the family of the deceased agreed in 2024 to accept blood money of 15 million Saudi Riyals, considering pleas that the killing was accidental.

The amount, which comes to around Rs 34 crore, was raised through crowdfunding. The huge sum collected in a short span of time drew wide attention and was hailed as 'the real Kerala Story'.

Sources close to Rahim's family said his sentence is ending this month, and he may be able to return home soon. His mother, Fathima, is eagerly awaiting her son's return after nearly two decades.

Rahim went abroad in 2006 at the age of 20 and took up work as a driver for a family. The differently-abled boy in the household got into an altercation with him, during which a breathing support apparatus attached to the child's body was accidentally detached.

Rahim did not notice it, and the boy subsequently died. Rahim was later found guilty.

Booth to 'Shakti Kendra': BJP sets sights on UP 2027

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

With the 2027 Assembly battle looming, the BJP has launched district-wise training across Uttar Pradesh. Current MPs as well as former MPs have been roped in to conduct sessions on narrative management, social media and election management down to the booth level.

Across the state's 75 districts, two-day training camps under the 'Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Mahabhiyan' have been held in recent weeks. From the polling booth up to the 'Shakti Kendra' level, cadres are being trained in organisational expansion, booth management, cadre development, party history, social media and media handling, operational methodology, national challenges and narratives, and the Narendra Modi government's welfare schemes for the poor.

CADRE TRAINING

- BJP launches district-wise training ahead of UP polls
- Two-day camps across 75 districts
- Cadres being trained on organisation, narratives
- MPs, MLAs, panchayat leaders join training drive
- Camps held in Gorakhpur, Hapur, Kanpur, Katra

All current and former Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assemblies, along with chairpersons, heads and members of district panchayats and urban local bodies, office-bearers of the BJP's district executive, various Morchas and Prakoshth and public representatives active in diverse fields are participating in the training programme.

In these sessions, which began in April and are scheduled to end by May, karyakartas are trained at the booth level in voter contact, increasing vote share, and micro-management. Since each booth is treated as a crucial unit for victory, workers are assigned specific responsibilities aimed at strengthening the election machinery.

Camps have been held in Gorakhpur, Hapur, Kanpur and Shravasti, with Kannauj next in line. On Saturday, former minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi trained cadres in Hapur on how to respond to criticism of the government's austerity measures.

LPG tanker with 20,000 tonnes of gas reaches Gujarat via Strait of Hormuz

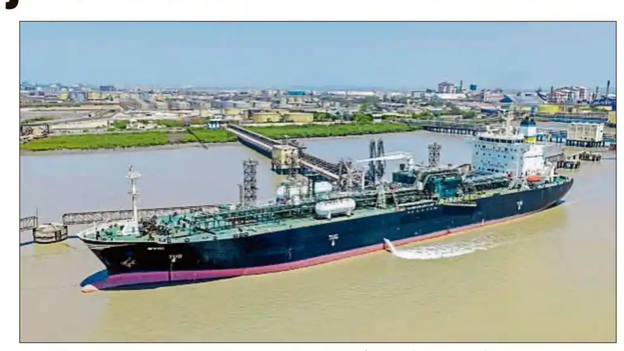
AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

A Marshall Islands-flagged vessel carrying 20,000 metric tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) arrived at the Deendayal Port Authority in Gujarat's Kandla late on Saturday, successfully navigating the volatile Strait of Hormuz amid the ongoing West Asia crisis.

The MV SYMI, which departed from Qatar, docked at the port around 11.30 pm on Saturday after crossing the strategic waterway on May 13, said Shipping Ministry officials here on Sunday.

This arrival comes as India continues to maintain its energy supply chain despite heightened tensions in the region.

Since early March, 13 India-flagged vessels — 12 LPG tankers and one crude-oil tanker — have crossed the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of the world's energy supplies pass.


Marshall Islands-flagged tanker, 'Symi', carrying around 20,000 tonnes of liquified petroleum gas, arrives at Kandla Port in Gujarat's Kachchh district. PTI

The narrow passage has faced severe disruptions since the outbreak of the West Asia conflict on February 28, triggered by US-Israel attacks on Iran and subsequent retaliatory strikes. India has strongly condemned attacks on commercial shipping in the area.

At a special meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Parvathaneni Harish, described the targeting of commercial vessels — endangering civilian crew members and impeding freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz — as "unacceptable".

Sri SIDDARAMAIAH
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka

ಸಾರಿಗೆ ಇಲಾಖೆ
TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT
THREE YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT
MILESTONES

Sri D.K. SHIVAKUMAR
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Construction of **15** new Regional Transport Offices at a cost of **₹70.12** crore I Construction of 6 additional new RTOs in progress at a cost of **₹39.25** crore.

Automated/ Computerised Driving Test System (ADTS)

Establishment of Automated Driving Test Tracks at **45** different locations across the state at a cost of **₹266.00** crore

High Security Registration Plates (HSRP)

Installation of High Security Registration Plates for over **59** lakh vehicles across Karnataka

Geo-Fencing

Implementation of Geo-Fencing based m-Vahan Fitness App across **66** RTOs I Fitness Certificates issued only after successful inspection

Automated Vehicle Inspection Centres

Construction of Automated Vehicle Inspection Centres at **12** locations under the DBFOT model and **20** locations under the BOO model under the PPP scheme is in progress

Smart Enforcement

Installation of AI-based cameras at **7** toll plazas on major national highways at a cost of **₹5.65** crore and at **80** additional locations at a cost of **₹70.00** crore is in progress

Centralized Printing Facility (CPF)

Microchip-based RC and DL Smart Card system with centralized printing facility I Karnataka ranks **4th** in implementation of this project

Heavy Vehicle Driver Training Institutes

Heavy Vehicle Driver Training Institutes established at Bengaluru, Dharwad, Kalaburagi and Mangaluru at a cost of **₹46.00** crore I Construction of institutes at Ballari, Vijayapura, Nagamangala and Shivamogga at a cost of **₹21.00** crore is in progress

Contactless / Online Services

Sarathi - **15** Contactless Services
Sarathi - **16** Non-Contactless Services
Vahan - **9** Contactless Services
Vahan - **12** Non-Contactless Services

Retro Reflective Tape

Installation of **Retro Reflective Tape and Rear Marking Plates** in vehicles to reduce accidents

Seizing Yard

Seizing Yard established by KSRTC at Chandapura, Bengaluru at a cost of **₹1.48** crore I Construction of Seizing Yards at Devanahalli, Bengaluru and Mangaluru at a cost of **₹7.58** crore is in progress

Karnataka Motor Transport and Other Related Workers Social Security and Welfare Board

The Transport allied Workers Board is presently functioning under the Labour Department I Approval has been obtained from the Cabinet for bringing it under the Transport Department. It will be brought under the jurisdiction of the Transport Department after obtaining approval in the upcoming Legislative Assembly I Provision of scholarship assistance, accident compensation, natural death compensation and funeral assistance, marriage assistance, maternity benefits for beneficiaries/spouses, educational assistance for children, provident fund, housing and old-age home facilities

Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility (RVSF) Policy

Implementation of the RVSF scheme for scrapping old polluting vehicles I A total of **11,368** vehicles scrapped so far

New Software for Pollution Under Control (PUC) Certificate

Inspection of **5,95,000** vehicles and issuance of certificates

Driver Drowsiness & Attention Warning System (DD & AWS)

Installation of Driver Drowsiness & Attention Warning Systems in **300** KSRTC buses at a cost of **₹2.50** crores for early identification of Driver drowsiness / behaviour to avoid accidents

Vehicle Location Tracking Device (VLTD) & Emergency Button Project

Installation of VLTD and Panic Button system as per Central Government - MORTH (Ministry of Road Transport & Highways) guidelines in **2,25,560** public service vehicles to enhance safety of women and children I Establishment of Command and Control Centre at the Office of the Transport Commissioner at a cost of **₹22.00** crore.

Hon'ble Transport & Muzrai Minister **Sri Ramalinga Reddy** participated in the programme of Road Safety Campaign

As enshrined in our Constitution, - to safeguard public property and to abjure violence is the fundamental duty of every citizen of India.

Commissioner Transport and Road Safety
1st Floor, TTMC Building, 'A' Block, K.H. Road, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru - 560027
www.transport.karnataka.gov.in Email: transcom@nic.in Tel.No.: 080-22214900

DECCAN HERALD
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In fuel hike, politics meets economics

Soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to adopt austerity measures, including reducing fuel consumption, petrol, diesel, and CNG prices have been hiked for the first time in more than four years. The retail prices of petrol and diesel were raised by Rs 3 per litre. The hikes are intended to absorb the impact of the global crude oil prices, which soared in the wake of the war in West Asia. A Rs 10-per-litre cut in special excise duty was announced in March to partly offset the losses incurred by oil marketing companies (OMCs). Though the increases looked inevitable, the Assembly elections in West Bengal and other states prompted the government to delay it. So, the decision is as much political as it is economic. The impact of economic shocks such as oil price hikes can be moderated and regulated if timely decisions are taken, and there is transparency about them.

The mounting losses faced by the OMCs are cited, rightly, as the reason for the price hike. The public sector retailers were estimated to lose around Rs 1,000 crore daily when crude prices hovered above $100 per barrel. The hike is not expected to compensate them fully for their under recoveries. This suggests the possibility of more and higher retail price increases in the coming weeks. The global oil supply situation is expected to be uncertain for the next few months, even if the war were to stop now. So, prices could remain elevated throughout this year, and so the pressure is likely to continue. Also, access to supplies from Russia is dependent on US policies and pressures.

Price hikes could raise annualised inflation by around 25 basis points

The shock of the price hike will travel through the whole of the economy and trigger inflationary pressures that have been under control. The impact is already visible. Manufacturing costs have increased across all sectors. Shortages have forced many establishments, particularly in the food and hospitality sectors, to cut their daily operations or to close. Many have started passing on the higher costs to consumers. The wholesale price index has already gone up to 8.3% in April, up from 2.3% in February and 3.9% in March. The consumer price index (CPI) will soon reflect the new prices as fuels carry a weight of about 5% in the CPI basket. It is estimated that the price hikes could raise annualised inflation by around 25 basis points. This will take inflation beyond the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s comfort level and may lead to an increase in interest rates. Beyond the percentages, there will be severe stress on the budgets of common people and families.

Inclusion, not deletion, must be SIR mantra

The Election Commission of India (ECI)'s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, scheduled to begin on June 20 in Karnataka and a few other states, is being projected as a long-overdue exercise in electoral hygiene. On paper, the objective is unimpeachable: remove duplicate and deceased voters, correct discrepancies, and add newly eligible citizens to the rolls. A clean electoral register is fundamental to the credibility of democracy. However, the experience of similar exercises elsewhere, particularly in West Bengal, where about 27 lakh living voters were deleted after being flagged for 'logical discrepancies', has triggered deep apprehension that this may become an exercise in exclusion rather than inclusion. These were not ghost voters or fictitious entries; many were ordinary citizens who had voted for years. Even after judicial intervention and review mechanisms, a majority of these remained disenfranchised, with the Supreme Court of India ultimately declining relief to those excluded. The episode has cast a long shadow over Karnataka's forthcoming exercise.

Chief Electoral Officer V Anbu Kumar's assurance that no eligible voter will be left out is welcome. Yet scepticism persists, particularly over 'progeny mapping' — linking voters to parents or spouses to detect irregularities. This may appear technologically sound, but Indian social realities rarely fit algorithmic templates. Women often change names after marriage; initials differ across generations; names are spelt differently across school records, Aadhaar cards, ration cards, and electoral rolls. In many rural and marginalised communities, documentation is patchy. Such inconsistencies cannot automatically become grounds for exclusion. It is encouraging that both the Congress and the BJP have formed teams to monitor the revision. Their involvement can strengthen transparency and assist vulnerable voters. But parties must treat this as a democratic responsibility, not merely an electoral calculation. Complaining after names disappear will be futile if vigilance is absent now.

Both the Congress and the BJP have formed teams to monitor the revision

The ECI once took pride in how many citizens it brought into the democratic fold. Increasingly, however, the emphasis appears to have shifted towards how many names can be deleted. Certainly, dead and duplicate entries must go. But the balance between cleansing and exclusion is delicate. The spirit guiding this exercise should resemble the Aadhaar enrolment drive, where the emphasis was overwhelmingly on inclusion. Even those without formal documents — the homeless — were given identity because the system sought to recognise, not reject, them. The commission should also give a strong push to online enrolment to reduce pressure on the system and encourage better participation. The right to vote lies at the heart of constitutional democracy, which is strengthened not by disenfranchisement, but by enfranchisement. Karnataka's SIR must become an exercise in expanding democratic confidence, not shrinking it.

CRACKS IN OPPOSITION

I.N.D.I.A. adrift after polls

Crushing defeats suffered by the TMC and the DMK have put a question mark on the future of the bloc

B S ARUN

What does the outcome of the latest round of Assembly elections mean to the unity of the anti-BJP Opposition nationally?

The results have dealt the I.N.D.I.A. bloc, already beset with internal contradictions and tensions, a body blow and rendered it so weak that it may take a lot of time and effort for it to regroup.

There is also a threat that the crushing defeat suffered by the two key parties of the formation — DMK and TMC — may leave the bloc terminally ill. As it is, the developments following the results in Tamil Nadu mean that the DMK is no longer part of this anti-BJP platform.

Separately, the outcome of the polls has the potential of leading to new equations in Parliament. One wonders if the act of the main I.N.D.I.A. partner, the Congress, deserting the DMK would push the latter to lend issue-based support to the ruling NDA at the Centre.

Also, will the Congress decision and other developments herald an entirely new non-BJP, non-Congress front consisting of most parties of the I.N.D.I.A. bloc? Such is the bloc's uncertainty that the future is pregnant with many possibilities.

But one factor is clear: the results have thoroughly weakened the I.N.D.I.A.grouping, launched in 2023 to stop the 'communal' BJP nationally. It did have some impact – the BJP failed to get a majority on its own in the Lok Sabha elections in 2024 and had to depend on the allies to form the government.

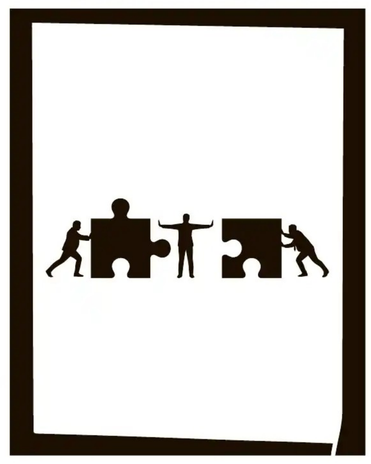
Hence, it will be a shot in the arm for the BJP if the DMK, hitherto a staunch opponent of the saffron outfit and a strong votary of the federal rights of the states, decides to carve a separate path for itself. Such a move could also redefine the way politics plays out in Tamil Nadu. We may even see a DMK-AIADMK-BJP combine facing Lok Sabha polls in 2029!

The BJP needs new allies in Parliament to pass Bills. The DMK has already written to the Lok Sabha Speaker to make a separate seating arrangement for the party in the House.

Sleeping with the BJP is nothing new for the DMK, which was part of the NDA from 1999 to 2003 when A B Vajpayee was the prime minister and had bagged some key ministries as a coalition partner.

The DMK parted ways with the BJP and joined hands with the UPA in 2004. With the DMK leaving the I.N.D.I.A. bloc, the TVK may replace it. The Congress has already announced that it will ally with the TVK to fight future elections. So, the TVK could be a new entrant in the I.N.D.I.A. grouping.

However, one silver lining for the Congress in the just-concluded elections was the result in Kerala. The unprecedented tally of 102 seats out of 140 for Congress-led UDF ensures that



the party either has chief ministers or shares power in four of the five south Indian states.

Still, challenging times are ahead for the I.N.D.I.A. bloc.

While the Congress is the only party in the set-up with a national outreach, most of the allies have been uneasy with its big brother attitude. This reflects their trust deficit with the Congress. In addition, there is a strange contradiction of being partners at the national level and bitter rivals in the states – the Congress opposed the Left parties in Kerala and the TMC in West Bengal.

Also, allies such as the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the RJD in Bihar were unhappy with the Congress. The party refused to recognise Tejashwi Yadav as the chief ministerial face in last year's Bihar's Assembly elections while it took its own time in entering into a seat-sharing deal with the DMK in the recent polls. A section of the Congress wanted a tie-up with the TVK.

The way the Congress jettisoned its two-decade-old ties with the DMK and hurriedly entered into a truck with the victorious TVK made the Dravidian party describe the act as "back-stabbing".

The Congress also did not share dais with its partners in Tamil Nadu or Bihar in the Assembly election campaigns.

In addition, the Left parties and the TMC are unhappy with the Congress for its tirade against them in the recent elections in West Bengal and Kerala.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, alleging that the two were "B teams" of the BJP, wanted to know why the Centre did not launch ED investigations into charges of corruption against the TMC and Left leaders.

This came at a time the Congress itself had been at the forefront of attacking the BJP for letting loose the central agencies against the leaders of the Opposition parties.

So, will this trust deficit lead to a third formation consisting of regional parties opposing both the BJP and the Congress? Will these include the DMK, TMC, RJD, SP, BJD, BRS, the NCP etc? The idea at the moment appears far-fetched but given the political bad blood, a new front is not entirely unlikely. If this happens, it will leave the anti-BJP Opposition further fragmented.

However, TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, soon after her election debacle, gave a call to the Congress and Left parties to come together to fight the BJP jointly. But the response to her appeal has been cold so far.

There was a reason why the former West Bengal chief minister made such a call. For, had the three parties – which fought separately in the recent elections – forged unity before polls, the outcome may have been different.

Look at the vote share of these parties in the April-May polls: The BJP got 2,92,24,804 votes, the TMC (2,60,13,377), the Congress (18,90,858) and the Left Front (31,79,479). The combined vote of these anti-BJP parties would have been 3,10,83,714, thus much more than the votes polled by the BJP.

Perhaps the three parties coming together could have stopped the BJP from capturing West Bengal. However, we must note that arithmetic is not chemistry in elections.

The next big test for the I.N.D.I.A. bloc is the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections next year. How the Congress goes ahead in seat-sharing with the Samajwadi Party will be watched with interest, though the former is a small player at the hustings.

(The writer is former Associate Editor, Deccan Herald*)*

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

Of stars, sofas, and such like

Political parties are quick to align with the stars

MINA ANAND

Seeing me lost in my thoughts, my husband asked what the matter was. "I was wondering how it is that an astrologer cannot predict his own future?" I replied.

My husband immediately caught on: "Oh, you are talking of the ex-OSD to the Tamil Nadu CM? Yes, that's indeed ironic. But maybe the astrologer just got tired of figuring out what the stars foretell and simply wanted a day in the working life of a star."

I laughed. "Yes, Tamil Nadu politics is one of reaching for the stars. Vincent Van Gogh would have loved to paint a portrait of the Starry Knights in Political Armour."

My husband agreed, saying that the political parties have so quickly become starstruck and have aligned accordingly. The Congress, in particular, was the first to hitch its wagon to a rising star.

Continuing in this vein, he added, "Then there's the five-star culture. Resort politics, where parties rush their MLAs to luxurious hotels, keeping the legislators safe from poaching predators."

"It's a star-struck political environment indeed," I meditated. "There's talk of star-crossing and of film-star-type 'sofa' politics."

"Sofas?" he exclaimed. "How does a prosaic thing like furniture come into this star-studded conversation?"

"From the film *Pushpa* – where deals are done in filmy style by gifting fancy sofas filled with cash," I replied.

"Oh!" exclaimed my husband. "Is that what the Opposition was alluding to when talking mysteriously of sofa sets appearing in political spaces?"

"Exactly." I affirmed. "Now you see how anything and everything is connected to stardom in Southern politics."

"Yes," my husband assented. Then he exclaimed, 'But Mina – have you forgotten? We are about to transfer our furniture from our Chennai house to our Bengaluru home. And there is that big antique sofa we are shifting! What if the authorities catch and grill us?"

"What's written in the stars, will be," I replied. "But don't worry, Anand. Firstly, we are strapped for cash. Secondly, we are commoners – neither stars nor superstars turned politicians. This sofa stuff is only for star performers. No one will look at us, I can assure you."

"You are right, Mina," sighed my husband with relief. "We should thank our lucky stars that we are nowhere in the celestial radar. We are just simple die-hard followers of cricket and cricket stars."

"Exactly," I replied. "Talking of sofas, Anand, I must tell you this story from my Air Force days: Dad was serving in the Air Force and commanding a unit in the north. On movie days, the whole unit gathered in the open-air theatre to enjoy the evening. There was a plush sofa set up in the front row for the Commanding Officer and his family. However, my siblings and I were too embarrassed to avail ourselves of this privilege and sat way back, merging with the crowd. I particularly remember one night, when the audience was spellbound, watching the big screen." "Was it a starlit night, Mina?" joked my husband.

I had the last word: "You bet it was, Anand. Starring Dev Anand and Meena Kumari."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

New low for academics. Ethics sacrificed for profit

Apropos 'NEET leak: CBI arrests botany lecturer from Pune' (May 17), the arrest of a chemistry professor earlier and now a biology lecturer exposes the evolving NEET-UG racket allegedly run by expert paper designers abusing their positions instead of upholding morality and confidentiality. The involvement of nine accused across India exposes the nexus, poor professional ethics and betrayal of academic responsibility. The NTA and other institutions concerned are equally culpable for failing to monitor faculty members' activities, including special coaching networks allegedly used for paper leaks and profiteering. The worst sufferers are lakhs of honest NEET-UG aspirants whose future is being compromised.
P V Prakash, Mumbai

Ban mosquito coils

Recent reports cite evidence of health risks for humans using mosquito repellent incense sticks. It is alarming to note that nearly 85% of these products in the market lack mandatory central insecticide registration. With nearly 70% of doctors identifying respiratory issues linked to this smoke, it has proved to be as hazardous as cigarette smoke. The fact that 48% of consumers believe these products are safe highlights a major gap in public awareness. The government must immediately enforce a strict ban on the sale of such illegal and unsafe products. Furthermore, citizens should be encouraged to adopt alternatives, such as natural plant-based repellents and neem oil. A green environment and good health must be our top priority.
Vijaykumar H K, Raichur

Lessons from Kerala

I refer to the editorial 'Congress, finally, reads the Kerala verdict' (May 16). The manner in which the Indian National Congress finally interpreted and responded to the Kerala verdict deserves appreciation and may well serve as the right course correction for the grand old party. The delay of 10 days in choosing the leader of the legislative party undoubtedly caused concern and somewhat affected the credibility earned by the alliance through the massive, favourable mandate it received from the people of Kerala. However, the final decision reflected a mature and systematic process in which the views of elected representatives, senior leaders and eminent personalities were carefully assessed. It has reinforced the importance of democratic values, internal consultation, and respect for the people's mandate.
A K Sugunan, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

India is important to save the world...under the leadership of PM Modi, a prosperous, prestigious, affluent, flourishing, and powerful India will be formed...everyone mocked the idea of abolition of Article 370 in Kashmir...there's peace all over in Kashmir now.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Minister

Flattery was formerly a vice;
it has now become the fashion.

Publilius Syrus

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

Green lungs face governance strain

Hasiru Mitra showed the promise of citizen-assisted park monitoring, but weak institutional response curtailed its impact

VEENA K BHAT

As Indian cities brave rising urban temperatures, declining green cover and mounting maintenance costs, urban green spaces can no longer be treated as aesthetic or recreational amenities alone. For many residents, neighbourhood parks are among the last accessible public spaces left in an increasingly built-up city. These parks function as critical climate infrastructure, helping regulate local temperatures, improve air quality and provide inclusive public spaces in dense urban environments. For Bengaluru, once celebrated as India's 'Garden City', the governance of neighbourhood parks is becoming inseparable from questions of urban liveability and climate resilience.

Against this backdrop, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP)'s — now Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) — Hasiru Mitra, a park monitoring system, was launched over two years ago. The initiative sought to directly involve citizens in the maintenance and monitoring of neighbourhood parks. Introduced as part of Bengaluru's participatory governance initiatives, the programme invited residents to report maintenance issues and coordinate with officials through digital platforms.

At a time when urban local bodies face increasing financial and administrative constraints, such citizen-assisted monitoring systems potentially offer low-cost decentralised mechanism for maintaining urban green infrastructure. Urban governance systems frequently struggle with everyday maintenance gaps that remain invisible within centralised administrative structures. Neighbourhood parks require continuous monitoring of watering systems, waste management, lighting, pathways, plant health and security. By involving residents familiar with these spaces, Hasiru Mitra attempted to create a distributed governance mechanism that could supplement administrative capacity.

Findings from a survey conducted by the author as part of ongoing research by the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), among Hasiru Mitra volunteers, reveal the institutional limitations of such participatory models when responsiveness mechanisms remain weak. While a majority of volunteers reported everyday monitoring of their allotted parks, administrative follow-up remained inconsistent. Volunteers had to navigate multiple reporting channels, including the park monitoring systems portal, Sahaaya 2.0, Hasiru Mitra WhatsApp groups and direct communication with contractors or officials. Yet the absence of clear accountability structures resulted in fragmented responses or prolonged delays. Participation existed, but responsiveness remained weak. Several volunteers also reported that repeated complaints often produced little visible action.

The survey reflected substantial civic willingness to engage with neighbourhood park governance. Many volunteers reported visiting parks daily and continuing to raise complaints despite limited responsiveness. The larger challenge lay in the inability of the institutional framework to translate citizen monitoring into coordinated administrative action. Citizens were mobilised into monitoring systems, but not into decision-making structures related to park management or long-term planning. Participation improved visibility of maintenance problems, but did not substantially alter the administrative design governing these green spaces.

A broader governance dilemma confronting Indian cities emerges here. Participatory initiatives are increasingly adopted within urban governance frameworks through digital platforms that enable reporting and citizen feedback. However, digital participation does not automatically translate into decentralised governance. In many cases, participation remains confined to information collection while planning authority and implementation decisions remain highly centralised.

The issue becomes particularly important at a time when Bengaluru is increasingly experiencing urban heat stress. Parks function as critical environmental infrastructure that improves neighbourhood liveability through shade, evapotranspiration and microclimatic cooling. As low-cost tools for mitigating urban heat, these spaces directly influence environmental quality, public health and the city's broader climate adaptation capacity. Yet public discourses on urban greening often remain limited to roadside plantation drives or symbolic tree-planting campaigns.

The transition from BBMP to the GBA in 2025 further complicated the initiative's institutional continuity. Most volunteers reported receiving little or no clarity regarding the future of the programme following this transition. While some digital reporting systems like Sahaaya 2.0 remain operational, the broader participatory structure appears administratively uncertain.

The GBA has recently introduced ward-level tree officers as part of its broader environmental governance reforms. While such measures may improve the maintenance of trees, the experience of Hasiru Mitra raises larger questions about whether participatory urban green governance can succeed without institutional responsiveness and administrative continuity. The larger lesson from Hasiru Mitra is not that citizen participation failed, but that participation alone cannot substitute for institutional capacity.

(The writer is a doctoral scholar at the Centre for Research in Urban Affairs, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru)

Your Lordships, environmental scrutiny is not anti-development

NIRMALA GOWDA AND RAVI CHELLAM

To:
The Honourable Chief Justice of India
Supreme Court of India, New Delhi
Subject: Respectful Representation Regarding Oral Observations in Pipavav Port Expansion Case

We write this letter with deep respect for the Supreme Court of India and for the rule of law, and with profound concern regarding the recent remarks made during the hearing relating to the Pipavav Port expansion project in Gujarat, including the observations: "In this country, the kind of litigations that are filed only to stall all development projects, that is the whole problem." "You see, you people don't want ports to be expanding, but how is the country going to progress? We can't understand this part." "You show us a single project in this country where these alleged environmentalist activists say we welcome this project; the country is progressing well; we welcome this project. Everything, you drag to this Court."

With respect, we object to the rhetorical framing of concerned and affected citizens as 'environmentalists', in a manner that implies a special-interest group ideologically opposed to 'development'. Those who approach this honourble court in the Pipavav matter are affected fishing communities, supported by researchers, lawyers, and public-spirited individuals, seeking enforcement of environmental law and protection of fundamental rights.

Beyond the rhetorical labelling, the substantive remarks themselves frame environmental scrutiny via public interest litigation as invariably obstructionist to 'development', despite such scrutiny and litigation being constitutionally sanctioned, legally established, democratically legitimate, and scientifically necessary processes recognised by Parliament and the Supreme Court itself.

It was, after all, the apex court that expanded and institutionalised public interest litigation by providing affected communities and public-spirited citizens an avenue to access justice. Equally, it is the Supreme Court that evolved much of India's environmental jurisprudence, and many of India's landmark environmental protections emerged through citizen-led PILs that governments and industries initially dismissed as 'anti-development'.

Further, Parliament itself enacted the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010, which explicitly mandates the application of the principles of sustainable development, the precautionary principle, and the polluter pays principle — precisely because 'development' projects can and do cause serious environmental degradation, requiring specialised environmental adjudication and public accountability.

Citizens and affected communities are, therefore, not creating obstacles to 'development'; they are only using constitutional and statutory mechanisms created by Parliament and strengthened by the jurisprudence evolved by the Supreme Court.

Most importantly, the issue is not one of 'development' versus 'anti-development'. It is a question of what kind of development, whom that development favours, and whether such development proceeds in accordance with the law and is within the framework of the Constitution. In the Pipavav case, the conflict is between the expansion of port infrastructure and the economic livelihoods of fishing communities, whose livelihoods remain secure only when the coastal and marine environment itself remains secure.

Moreover, these livelihood concerns are often articulated through PILs under environmental law because it remains one of the few legal frameworks through which affected and vulnerable communities are able to participate in, question, and seek accountability within large-scale 'development' processes from which they would otherwise remain excluded.

A vast majority of India's 1.4 billion people live with severe economic constraints and shoulder substantial family responsibilities. Even those who may have some financial bandwidth lack access to the information and assistance needed to seek justice. Among the relatively few who are able to approach these fora, the prospects of securing relief are increasingly grim. A recent *Indian Express* investigation into over 100,000 NGT orders (2020–2025) found that, in environmental and forest clearance matters, the tribunal ruled in favour of project developers in four out of five appeals. Therefore, the implication that development projects are routinely stalled through environmental litigation is not supported by data. Nor is it supported by our lived realities.

A 2021 World Bank report warned of $2.7 trillion in annual losses by 2030 if ecological tipping points are crossed. The 2025 Global Tipping Points Report, synthesising the work of over 150 scientists, warns the world is nearing irreversible tipping points. The question is no longer whether ecological destabilisation will affect economies and societies but how rapidly and severely.

We now inhabit a profoundly altered ecological reality in which environmental protection can no longer be treated as an obstacle to economic growth but as the foundation upon which economic progress and social stability depend. So, if India needs to progress, there is no way but for infrastructure projects to undergo rigorous scrutiny so that the last few remaining natural habitats and resources are protected.

In light of this, we respectfully request that this honourable court reconsider oral remarks made in the Pipavav proceedings so that they are not understood as casting doubt on the legitimacy of *bona fide* environmental public interest litigation or on the role of affected communities and citizens in seeking enforcement of environmental laws.

We further urge the Supreme Court to continue to uphold and deepen its rich environmental jurisprudence and to reaffirm that in the world's largest democracy, adherence to environmental law and the precautionary principle are essential parts of, and not an obstacle to, constitutionally sanctioned, legally established, environmentally sustainable, socially equitable, and democratically legitimate development. Article 51A(g) makes the protection and improvement of the natural environment a fundamental duty for every Indian citizen, and we should not forget or disregard it.

(Rajesh Ramkrishnan, convener of the Campaign to Defend Nature & People, also contributed to this)

(Nirmala is a Bengaluru-based activist-researcher who supports local communities to get judicial justice; Ravi is a Bengaluru-based wildlife biologist and conservation scientist.)

One of the most durable features of human experience, enchantment, is re-emerging

KATYA UNGERMAN

NYT

You aren't crazy. The world is actually getting weirder

In 2024, Tucker Carlson revealed that he had been physically attacked in his bed by a demon — "or by something unseen." The entity left four claw marks on each of his sides and on his left shoulder, he said. He was bleeding when he woke. Catholic and Orthodox clergy weighed in publicly, with an Orthodox priest lamenting that Carlson's Episcopalian faith left him ill-equipped to respond to such an attack.

More recently, Gregg Phillips, the head of FEMA's Office of Response and Recovery, made news for claiming that he had once been teleported, by forces beyond his control, to a Waffle House 50 miles away in Rome, Georgia. *The Times* sent a reporter to track down the workers and regulars at all three of Rome's Waffle House locations, but nobody remembered Phillips.

In a less esoteric vein, this past Easter, Catholic priests in dioceses across the United States welcomed the largest classes of converts they had seen in 15 or more years. Eastern Orthodox parishes are also reporting a surge in growth, particularly among young men. "In the whole history of the Orthodox Church in America," one Antiochian Orthodox priest told *The Times*, "this has never been seen."

The backdrop of all this is the peculiar atmosphere of contemporary public life — claustrophobic, faintly hallucinatory, where what we know as real feels like sand shifting under our feet. The first lady, Melania Trump, walks a humanoid robot down a White House red carpet and later tells the audience to imagine a future humanoid educator named "Plato." A former intelligence official testifies under oath that the US has been secretly retrieving and reverse-engineering crashed UFOs for decades, and that nonhuman "biologics" have been recovered. Demonic vexation, teleportation, increased interest in religious practice — those phenomena are all signs that life feels, to many, increasingly charged with unseen forces. You might say it has been re-enchanted. There's a widespread feeling that the material explanation is no longer sufficient; that something uncanny, maybe even numinous, is diffused into the texture of ordinary American life.

Pew found in 2024 that 30% of Americans consult astrology, tarot cards or fortune tellers at least once a year. New age practices are even more popular among some demographics, like younger women and LGBTQ adults. During my first pregnancy I received a reiki, or energy healing, treatment for my unborn son. It's now offered at major hospitals across the country.

What is going on? Why is the world re-enchanting itself now?

In 1917, the sociologist Max Weber argued that a long process of rationalisation, culminating in modernity, was eliminating "mysterious incalculable forces" from the world. Science would explain; technology would master; and magic would disappear. For a brief stretch of modern history, he seemed right: The enduring human instinct to believe in the otherworldly declined as empiricism, common evidentiary standards and, for the shortest period of all, mass media produced a rough consensus about what was real. Now we seem to be sliding back.

Three changes in both the kind of information we receive and the way we receive it may help explain what's going on. The first is that, in the era of digital technology and the endless scroll, the mind is being asked to do more than it comfortably can. The brain is a pattern-matching machine. Most of the time, it's like a piece of software running in the background, synthesising information without your noticing. You walk into a room and instantly read the mood; you glance at a friend's face and know something is wrong before they tell you. Today, there's just too much information — and we're noticing patterns that don't exist.

This mental overload is how you get from "that's an odd coincidence" to "nothing is a coincidence." It's the same type of thinking that produces QAnon and other conspiracy theories. It's what happens when a stranger on TikTok tells a million viewers this video was "meant" to find them, and many of them, despite being vaguely aware of how recommendation algorithms work, take it as a sign that supernatural forces are at work.

The second change has to do with proof and evidence. Doctored photographs predate AI and even the digital camera. But fabricating proof used to take work. AI has removed that friction — any claim can now be furnished with evidence on demand, evidence increasingly indistinguishable from the real thing. And since so much evidence can now be fabricated, any piece of evidence can be dismissed. When nothing is verifiable, then everything is permitted.

Finally, there's institutional decay. The paranoid explanation keeps turning out to be partly right. To give just one high-profile example, Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin, spent decades downplaying how addictive its product was, even as it fuelled an overdose epidemic that has killed hundreds of thousands of Americans.

When events like that one happen often enough, people lose confidence in institutional authority. There goes "the science," or "the church," or "the official story." Demonology, astrology or conspiracy theories about satanic paedophile cabals ruling the world fill the gap.

The result of all of those conditions is that life has begun to feel governed by forces beyond our understanding, by knowledge that is unverifiable and by authority that is distant and suspect. It is, in a word, beginning to feel medieval.

I do not believe that re-enchantment, in itself, is the main problem. After all, re-enchantment doesn't mean "irrational," or "untrue," or "conspiracy," though it can lead there. Rather, it's the re-emergence of one of the oldest and most durable features of human experience, the sense that the world is bigger than what human knowledge can, at a particular moment, measure. It's not a coincidence that many of our most famous scientists were obsessed with ideas that we'd now find crazy. Thomas Edison, for example, claimed to be working on a device that would try to receive the voices of the dead.

But enchantment mutates when it's untethered from a foundation, from a community that acts as a check on the most wild and destructive instincts.

In a *Rolling Stone* article about AI-induced spiritual crises, the writer Miles Klee spoke to an unnamed source whose partner had messaged extensively with ChatGPT. Eventually, the partner came believe he was God. He had an ecstatic experience with a product that has a stake in keeping him engaged; his story might have ended differently inside a spiritual community, where someone could have told him to slow down.

The world we're moving into will look more like the one before the modern era than like the one we grew up in. It will be saturated with the supernatural. Everyone will believe in something. The question is in what. **NYT**

Why dowry doesn't die

QUARRATUL AIN IFRAH

Bengaluru, the Silicon Valley of India and the hub of research and education, surprisingly turns out to be the city reporting the highest number of dowry-related cases in the country, as reported by the National Crime Records Bureau.

The NCRB's *Crime in India 2024* report states that the city registered 87% of dowry and domestic violence cases across all metropolitan cities, with 878 cases in 2024 and 933 in 2025. Analysts attribute this to higher registration of complaints as compared to other cities, yet the data is still terrifying.

The International Day of Families (May 15) came and went as yet another reminder that families are nowhere near living up to their professed ideals. Since 1961, dowry has been a criminal offence in India, yet it remains one of the most normalised crimes. The more we look into the matter, the deeper the strength it appears to hold.

Meenakshi Bali, writer and activist, says that the "issue is easy enough to resolve, but socio-economic factors have made it more complex than necessary. The version presented by patriarchy has changed how we speak about it."

It is apparent that a dowry is more of an economic transaction than mere 'gift-giving' between the families of the bride and groom. It is often explained as a form of financial security for the girl child in a system that historically denied women direct inheritance of property. The father is made to consider dowry an 'investment' in his daughter's future, aside from the brutal reality that she could be mistreated, abused or even killed if the price is not deemed 'worthy enough' by the groom's family.

As many as 834 deaths have been reported in Karnataka over a period of five-and-a-half years, amounting to an average of 12 to 13 deaths every month. The NCRB's 2024 report identifies "cruelty by husband or his relatives" as the single largest category of crimes against women nationally, accounting for over 1.2 lakh cases. It also shows that an average of around 7,000 women died annually due to dowry-related issues between 2017 and 2022.

The central reason for dowry's persistence lies in its normalcy. Before a crime can be reported, it must first be recognised as one. The stigma that a woman, though burnt and bleeding, must never return to her father's home forces the exploited women to hide or lie about their injuries.

The Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, like the earlier Indian Penal Code provisions, treats the unnatural death of a woman within seven years of marriage as dowry death when linked to cruelty or harassment for dowry. Yet, in practice, very little changes.

Only about 4,500 of the roughly 7,000 annual dowry-related deaths and incidents of domestic violence lead to chargesheets, and many of these investigations remain pending for six months to a year. Even when chargesheets are filed, over 90% face delays in court. But barely around 100 cases a year end in conviction.

A total of 2,097 cases were reported under the Dowry Prohibition Act in 2025; 1,326 of them are still pending trial, and only 612 are under investigation.

The system itself, then, falls short. But the social aspect is even worse. Dowry is linked to almost every major issue of gender discrimination. Female infanticide, sex determination, the denial of education to girls, and underfeeding or overworking a girl child because of the financial burden she is assumed to bring—all are normalised outcomes of the same mindset. The higher social priority accorded to sons makes the process cyclical, reinforcing patriarchal dowry culture. Families pushed into debt because of their daughters' marriages often try to recover the losses by demanding heavier dowries for their sons. Child marriage, too, appears more feasible because a younger bride usually requires a smaller dowry.

But this is only the conventional rural picture. Urban settings, on the other hand, have simply modernised the dowry. Lavish weddings dictated by the groom's family, luxury cars, apartments, foreign trips or the bride's family investing in the groom's business are all socially accepted forms of dowry. They are perhaps worse because, paradoxically, education and affluence do not reduce social evils; they merely inflate their price and standards.

If education itself fails to make an impact, awareness may be the only force left.

(The writer is a master's student based in Kalaburagi)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: MAY 1976

KFD spreads to new area in State

New Delhi, May 17
A number of deaths due to Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD) have been reported this year and the disease has spread to adjacent areas, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). KFD is caused by a virus carried by mites. The disease was first noticed in 1957 in Karnataka. It is unknown outside India. The ICMR has warned that the infection has appeared in an entirely new area 20 km south of the boundary of what was earlier known as the KFD area, This area has been under surveillance since 1957.

25 YEARS AGO: MAY 2001

Antony sworn in CM

Thiruvananthapuram, May 17
On a day of high drama, Mr A K Antony was sworn-in chief minister of Kerala for the third time at the head of an eight-member ministry which was immediately followed by the appointment of Mr K Muralidharan, MP, son of senior leader Mr Karunakaran, as the new Pradesh Congress Committee president. Congressmen swarmed the Raj Bhavan and Indira Bhavan (KPCC HQ) here for witnessing the two events which were more or less expected to happen simultaneously since these were linked to a pre-poll deal stuck between the Antony and Karunakaran factions.

OASIS | SUDHA UMASHANKER

The quiet qualities that command respect

All of us want to be respected and acknowledged for what we bring to the table in terms of contributions, value additions and the difference we make—whether it is at home, in the workplace, or in social organisations we belong to. And often many of us feel we are not duly recognised and respected or that we are ignored until the day our work shines through, by when it is usually too late.

To earn respect on the career front, one has to possess cutting-edge knowledge, finely honed skills and agility, apart from delivering consistently. This is what will make us stand out. That said, certain other qualities of the heart are vital to command respect. The way we conduct ourselves and interact with peers, colleagues, superiors and those who seek our services matters.

A well-known cardiac surgeon observed in an interview that while there were equally qualified surgeons in the field, what drove patients to a select few was the quality of compassion. It is the same with ordinary people endowed with innate goodness.

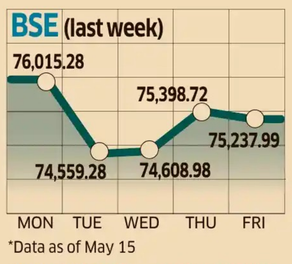
In these days of falling ethical and moral standards, a person who abides by dharma is known for his/her integrity, ethical dealings and fairness in judgment and easily wins respect.

Humility and not throwing one's weight around or acting pompous – which goes to show the person is not vain or egoistic – is an intangible asset.

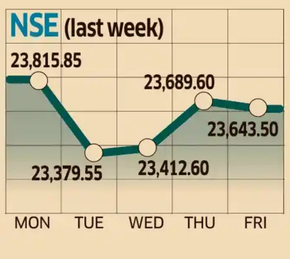
Authenticity and readiness to acknowledge if mistakes were made and express gratitude for tasks well done add to the respect quotient.

Gaining respect takes time even if one shows great promise and brilliance. The great philosopher Ramanuja had a demanding teacher in his maternal uncle Thirumalai Nambi, who did not take him under his wing for years because he was testing the student. Later he was taught the *Ramayana* and other texts. Having impressed the mentor with his diligence and grasp, he was presented with the title of *Emberumanaar* (Our Lord). Working with a perfectionist mentor can be a humbling experience but will help one garner respect eventually.

If you feel you are not being given respect, do a reality check. Is there something you can work on or do differently? If you genuinely think you are being singled out, only then call it quits or set boundaries.



*Data as of May 15



TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
BHARTIARTL	3.80%	TITAN	-7.64%
ADANIPORTS	2.01%	RELIANCE	-6.92%
SUNPHARMA	1.77%	TECHM	-6.34%
KOTAKBANK	1.72%	M&M	-6.21%
TATASTEEL	1.10%	ETERNAL	-5.97%

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
TATA CONS	6.53%	TITAN COMP	-10.06%
ONGC	5.48%	SHRIRAM FIN	-7.67%
COAL INDIA	1.46%	JIO FIN SER	-7.57%
		ETERNAL	-6.40%
		INDUSINDBK	-6.09%

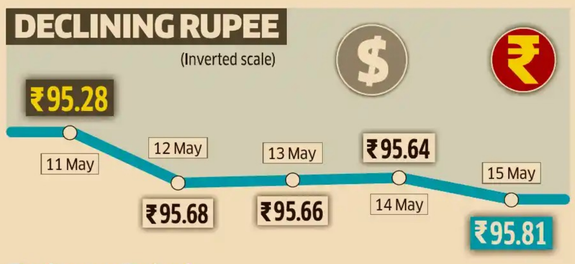
Sensex (52-week)

May 15, 2025	May 15, 2026	
82,530.74	75,237.99	-8.84%

Nifty (52-week)

May 15, 2025	May 15, 2026	
25,062.10	23,643.50	-5.66%

10-year Bond yield 7.06%



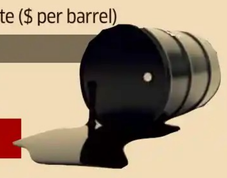
Exchange Rates*

Dollar	₹ 95.81	SGD	₹ 74.97
Pound	₹ 128.09	Yen (100 units)	₹ 60.54
Euro	₹ 111.63		

*Price at which banks sell

Crude Oil Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE
$105.42*
▲ 4.20%
*Rate as of May 16



Bengaluru fuel pump price*

(Retail)

Petrol*	₹106.17	₹0% ↔
Diesel*	₹94.10	₹0% ↔

*Rates as of May 17 #Rate change compared with yesterday

Commodity watch

COFFEE

Category	Rate (Rs per 50 kg)*
Arabica Parchment	₹ 22500 – 23000
Arabica Cherry	₹ 12100 - 14400
Robusta Parchment	₹ 17500 – 18200
Robusta Cherry	₹ 9300 - 10200

*Rates as on May 14

Other Commodities

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

Bivoltine (BV)	₹ 687
Cross Breed (CB)	₹ 618

*Average rates as on May 15

When private is not always better: The Air India Story

K GIRIPRAKASH

For decades, Air India under government ownership was a byword for inefficiency. Delayed flights, ageing aircraft, overstaffed terminals, and bailout after bailout paid for by the Indian taxpayer. Yet for all that, it never lost $2.8 billion in a single year. Its new owner, Tata Group managed to do that in 2025-26. This single fact underlines the uncomfortable truth behind the much-hyped privatisation of Air India.

The crash of Air India Flight AI-171 last June brought much of this into sharp focus.

Air India Flight AI-171, a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, bound for London from Ahmedabad, crashed seconds after takeoff, killing 241 of the 242 people on board and 19 on the ground, last June. The preliminary report released a month after the crash, gave an indication of how the crash happened. The report also published snatches of a conversation between the pilots leading to speculation about the involvement of one of the pilots responsible for the crash. The final report from India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau is expected next month, according to the civil aviation minister K. Rammohan Naidu. Its findings will land on an airline already struggling to explain itself. To understand how Air India arrived at this point, it is necessary to go back to the moment of the sale.

TURBULENT TIMES

The Tatas paid
Rs 2,700 cr
($358 million) upfront in cash and took over **Rs 15,300 crore** of debt – for a total bid of **Rs 18,000 crore** (approximately $2.39 billion)

On January 27, 2022, the Government of India transferred
100%
of Air India's shares to Tata Sons' fully-owned subsidiary Talace Pvt Ltd

PRE-SALE, Air India was losing **Rs 20 crore** every single day and it had around **12,000 employees** on its rolls.

POST-SALE, the airline has gone from roughly 12,000 employees and **$9.5 billion** in accumulated losses at acquisition, to **30,000-plus employees**

Air India reported a loss of
$2.8 bn
in 2025-26, highest ever in a single year

Campbell Wilson, unveiled Vihaan.AI, a five-year transformation plan

Directorate General of Civil Aviation identified **51 specific safety lapses at Air India** – seven classified as critical safety risks requiring immediate correction, and **44 categorised as serious systemic failures** in its audit report, soon after the crash in Ahmedabad in June last year

The maths

On January 27, 2022, the Government of India transferred 100% of Air India's shares to Tata Sons' fully-owned subsidiary Talace Pvt Ltd. The Tatas paid Rs 2,700 crore ($358 million) upfront in cash and took over Rs 15,300 crore of debt — for a total bid of Rs 18,000 crore (approximately $2.39 billion). At the point of handover, Air India was losing Rs 20 crore every single day and it had around 12,000 employees on its rolls.

Post-sale, the airline has gone from roughly 12,000 employees and $9.5 billion in accumulated losses at acquisition, to 30,000-plus employees and a fresh $2.8 billion loss in a single year under private ownership. It is the kind of loss which has continued to mount at a pace the government era never quite matched in a single financial year.

Soon after takeover of the airline, its management under the leadership of a Singapore Airlines veteran, Campbell Wilson, unveiled Vihaan.AI, a five-year transformation plan. The plan was built on five key pillars: exceptional customer experience, robust operations, industry-best talent, industry leadership, and commercial efficiency and profitability.

While the acquisition of new aircraft has been rolled out at a faster pace — 600 new aircraft with a list price of around $70-80 billion — and is quite laudable, the airline has been found wanting in terms of the goals it set out to achieve. For example, the country's aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation identified 51 specific safety lapses at Air India — seven classified as critical safety risks requiring immediate correction, and 44 categorised as serious systemic failures in its audit report, soon after the crash. The findings spanned systemic neglect of safety management, inadequate monitoring of flight operations, maintenance record forgery, crew fatigue mismanagement, and the operation of aircraft without proper emergency equipment checks.

There have been other instances too: A Chicago to Delhi flight was forced to turn back after five hours because eight of its twelve lavatories had become unusable. A Delhi to Vancouver service flew for nearly eight hours before returning because nobody had verified the aircraft had regulatory approval to enter Canadian airspace. If one adds a litany of complaints from the pilots, ranging from claims that they were treated as bonded labour to regular threats from the HR department, it is clear that a key part of the workforce is in open conflict with the management.

Assumptions

The transformation plan had always assumed that the hardware was the difficult problem — that if you ordered enough new aircraft, hired enough new people, and rebranded aggressively enough, the culture would follow. It hasn't.

The main reason for the privatisation of Air India was that if it remained in the public sector, inefficiencies and losses would spiral out of control, forcing the Government to shut it down. Its sale to a private sector company was based on the logic that it would remove all these challenges and India would get a highly-efficient airline. The downside to that is that if one assumes that the private sector is automatically more capable than the state, one fails to provide enough scrutiny whenever the private sector fails.

This perhaps has led to Air India's underperformance. The management poured enormous amounts of money into ordering more aircraft, merging four airlines, hiring about 9,000 employees, and expanding routes, all at the same time: the pace of what the management wanted to achieve ran far ahead of the pace of what the organisation was actually capable of achieving.

(The writer is a senior aviation journalist based in Bengaluru)

From overseas to home shores: PM's call rebalances India's travel demand

Kashmir, Munnar, Kodaikanal, Shillong and Gangtok are seeing an uptick of 25-30% in inquiries

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

India's tourism and hospitality sectors are weighing the impact of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to citizens to avoid non-essential international travel for a year amid geopolitical and economic uncertainty. Industry stakeholders expect the move to redirect demand toward domestic destinations, with early signs of increased interest already visible across key hill and leisure circuits.

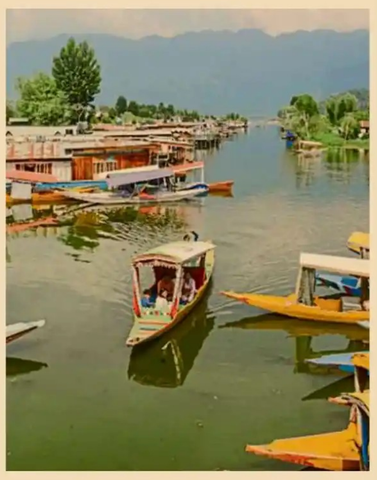
"We have a pulse of the matter and determine that destinations like Kashmir, Munnar, Kodaikanal, Shillong and Gangtok are seeing an uptick of 25-30% in inquiries. This is coming from those considering foreign travel. These destinations are premium and seen as substitutes for foreign shores. Shorter trips such as Delhi-Mussoorie or Shimla are gaining momentum. The PM's appeal may accelerate this trend," said Rajiv Mehra, General Secretary, Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH).

In Karnataka too, Madikeri, Chikkamagaluru, along with Mysuru, continue as perennial favourites. A lot of people in the vicinity, as well as in North India, are expressing a desire to visit them. There is immense cross-country interest, he told *DH*.

Mehra said rising international airfares are already influencing travel decisions. Before the PM's appeal, many travellers were deferring overseas trips due to higher costs and safety concerns. "Airfares to Europe have increased by nearly 25-30%, while fares to several Eastern destinations are up 15-20%. The depreciation of the rupee makes foreign travel even more expensive," he said, adding that a 30-40% dip in outbound travel is on the horizon, which could convert into domestic journeys.

India's outbound tourism has expanded rapidly, with an estimated 3-4 crore Indians travelling abroad annually, driven by rising incomes, younger demographics and improved connectivity. Leisure accounts for 43.5% of travel, with total overseas spending estimated at $30-32 billion. Popular destinations include the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, the US, Singapore, and the UK.

The West Asia conflict has added turbulence, with airspace closures and crude price spikes disrupting travel flows and compounding uncertainty.



Tourists take a shikara ride on the Dal Lake, in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. PTI FILE PHOTO

At the same time, domestic tourism remains a major pillar of India's travel economy, with over 3.27 crore domestic tourist visits recorded between January and August 2025, according to Ministry of Tourism data.

Industry stakeholders say any moderation in outbound travel could strengthen domestic demand, benefiting airlines, hotels, transport operators and regional tourism economies, while supporting employment, infrastructure utilisation and easing forex outflows.

Travel companies are already recalibrating their focus, said Ravi Gosain, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO). "They are shifting from international travel to domestic tourism including spiritual, wellness, wildlife, leisure and experiential segments within India," he stated, adding that higher inquiries on fares, visas and packages are visible, and he expects a 10-15% decline in premium outbound leisure travel, while other segments remain stable.

Hospitality players say demand trends remain steady for now. Hari Sukumar, VP Operations, Jaypee Palace Hotel Agra, said, "No abrupt decline so far. Domestic leisure and short-duration travel remain resilient," adding that moderation in outbound travel could shift demand to domestic hospitality and experiential travel. EaseMyTrip CEO Rikant Pittie said domestic tourism may gain support following the PM's appeal, benefiting local economies.

Samir MC, CEO of Tamara Leisure Experience, mentioned that it presents an opportunity to build an India-first travel ecosystem benefiting local communities, artisans, transport providers and farmers.

AI becoming infra of intelligence: TCS chief

BENGALURU, DHNS

AI is now becoming the infrastructure of intelligence. It will influence how enterprises invest, organise supply chains, manage risk, and serve stakeholders, TCS Chairman N Chandrasekaran said.

In his letter to shareholders in the TCS Annual Report FY26, Chandrasekaran said GenAI and agentic AI are entering a new phase of growth. AI will not just be a layer, but will be the operating foundation. Customers will move from pilots to scale, embedding AI into core functions, he said.

He added that the company is working with customers across industries in their AI-led transformation. TCS will prioritise efforts across four areas, including building AI operating systems for industries, to accelerate deployment of agentic AI solutions.

FY2026 marked an inflection point for enterprise AI. For the first time since GenAI emerged in 2023, customers moved decisively from pilots to scaled deployments, TCS CEO and MD K Krithivasan said. "To strengthen the company's differentiation and competitive edge, we must be deeply embedded in the AI ecosystem and operate with both speed and scale."

Meanwhile, the CEO's remuneration in FY6 saw a 6.3% YoY rise to Rs 28.1 crore. The compensation is 332.8 times the median salary of TCS staff. His package includes salary of Rs 1.676 crore, benefits, perquisites and allowances of Rs 1.437 crore and commission of Rs 25 crore. In FY25, Krithivasan took home Rs 26.52 crore.

NEW REGULATION

RBI's 'Payments Vision 2028' ushers structural re-design of ecosystem

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently released 'Payments Vision 2028' that marks a shift from scale-building to structural re-design of India's payments ecosystem.

For most of the existing payment operators, the document is neither hostile nor neutral — it is conditionally supportive, while clearly signalling greater regulatory control over networks, data, and economics.

The vision document is constructive toward card payments and creates policy space for several long-standing priorities of the payment sector. At the same time, it signals closer scrutiny of card ecosystem economics, tokenisation frameworks, and cross-border competitive dynamics. The outcome will depend less on the headline document and more on how underlying measures are designed. Early engagement is critical.

It seeks to build an open and interoperable card ecosystem with emphasis on merchant choice, smart tokenisation and orchestration, and transparent pricing. The proposed shared responsibility framework would make both the issuer and beneficiary bank jointly liable for unauthorised digital payment transactions.

The document outlines reforms in the cross-border payments system. The RBI is likely to publish dedicated cross-border payments reports, conduct a comprehensive ecosystem review and streamline cross-border authorisation processes.

Payment operators

The vision document calls for innovation in card payments. This creates policy space for continued development of tokenised payment models, contactless and embedded experiences, stronger authentication and fraud controls and card-linked innovation aligned with security, inclusion, and efficiency objectives.

It supports continued investment in card-led innovation in India and provides a stronger basis for engagement on tokenisation, credential security, and newer card-based use cases.

A more open and interoperable card ecosystem is the principal strategic watchpoint. The vision's intention to reimagine card payments through a more open and interoperable ecosystem is the most strategically-significant card-related theme in the document.

It signals future focus on merchant and consumer choices, transaction orchestration, tokenisation standards, portability of payment relationships, pricing transparency and pressure on closed or proprietary models.

This could develop constructively if interoperability is implemented in line with global standards and strong security principles. However, if interpreted more aggressively, it could have direct implications for interchange economics,

routing economics, and control over network token standards.

In particular, greater emphasis on pricing transparency could over time create pressure for closer scrutiny of interchange and related economics, while a broader interoperability agenda could create risk if India were to move toward network-agnostic or locally-defined token standards rather than globally-aligned token frameworks.

This is therefore both an opportunity for engagement and a longer-term structural risk that should be monitored closely.

Cross-border payments reform

Cross-border reform is the clearest policy opportunity and a strategic competitive watchpoint. The vision commits to a holistic review of the cross-border payments framework, simplification of regulatory friction, single-window authorisation, where both the Payment and Settlement Systems, Act, and the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) approvals are required; stronger reporting on cost, speed, transparency, and volumes and alignment with global standards and best practices.

This directly aligns with several long-standing digital payments priorities in India, including licensing clarity, process simplification, more coherent treatment of international payment flows and better interoperability with global frameworks.

At the same time, this should also be viewed through a competitive lens. RBI's broader cross-border agenda could support the expansion of UPI-linked bilateral arrangements and account-to-account payment corridors, which may over time place pressure on portions of traditional card-based cross-border flows.

This is therefore the area where the vision offers the most-immediate opportunity to support constructive reform, while also requiring a clear view of where payment operators' cross-border value-proposition must remain differentiated.

Fraud liability reform

RBI proposes examining a shared responsibility model for unauthorised digital payment transactions rather than maintaining a purely issuer-centric framework. This aligns directionally with a more risk-based approach to fraud accountability across participants. It may create an opening to revisit how responsibility is allocated across issuers, acquirers, merchants, and networks. At the same time, implementation will need careful management to avoid misalignment between RBI requirements and existing scheme-level dispute and chargeback rules. This has potentially significant legal, operational, and commercial implications and warrants early review.

Cyber resilience

The proposed Cyber Key Risk Indicator framework for non-bank payment system operators signals a move toward more continuous, data-driven supervision. RBI's broader emphasis on analytics and AI-enabled oversight also points to increasing expectations around data quality, transparency, and reporting frequency. However, India may require more granular local reporting, country-specific key risk indicators, more frequent operational and incident disclosures and enhanced governance and supervisory readiness. The Vision also signals possible lighter-entry pathways for smaller or emerging payment providers, broader oversight of critical ecosystem participants and greater regulatory attention to platforms influencing payment flows or acceptance.

These changes may ultimately help level the regulatory playing field, particularly if currently unregulated actors are brought under more formal oversight. However, there is also a risk of temporary asymmetry if newer participants can scale under lighter obligations before full regulation applies.

Post office transactions: Changed regulations, customers should know

The Department of Posts has issued an order to all its circles and regions to implement the applicable portion of the new Income Tax Rules, 2026. Its order dated April 27, requires the individuals and others to quote PAN for specified high-value transactions, an alternative for those who don't possess PAN, a consolidated and single declaration form for not deducting taxes. At the same time, post offices shall follow due reporting and record retention requirements. Let us look at the compliance-related changes:

High-value transactions

Post office customers are now required to quote their PAN for most financial transactions. They are, opening and operating accounts, investing in savings schemes, cash deposits aggregating to Rs 10 lakh in a financial year in one or more accounts of a person, cash withdrawals aggregating to Rs 10 lakh or more in a financial year in one or more accounts of a person, time deposit of an amount exceeding Rs 50,000 or aggregating to more than Rs 5 lakh during a financial year.

Those individuals, HUFs and Associations of Persons who don't possess PAN, but wish to enter into those transactions, will also be allowed only upon filing the Form 97. The said form is a replacement of the erstwhile Form 60, with certain changes. It insists upon these mandatory details — Part A: Nature of transaction; Part-B: Declaration; Part-C: Identity and address, including name, date of birth, PAN applied for or not, Aadhaar number, resident and office address, mobile/telephone number, email id; Part-D: Details of the transaction; Part-E: Documents submitted as proof of identity, address, and date of birth; and Part-F: Verification with the signature of the declarant.

No deduction of TDS

To receive certain incomes from the post office, such as provident fund withdrawals, pension, insurance commission, rent, interest on deposits, etc, without deduction of tax, a resident individual, HUFs, and other specified entities are required to submit a self-declaration in Form 121. The said form is unified and replaced with the erstwhile Form 15G and Form 15H.

PRABHAKAR K S
FOUNDER & CEO OF SHREE TAX CHAMBERS

Form 121 insists upon the following details — Part A: Details of the declarant, income and declaration. The declaration in Form No. 121 should be filed with the payer for paying such income for every tax year. This form can be submitted online or physically to the payer, at the beginning of the tax year or before the first payment is made. In case of income being received from multiple payers, then the form is required to be submitted to each payer. Part B: Details of the person responsible for paying the above income, name, address, TAN, PAN, contact details and applicable tax year, declaration and declaration by the person responsible for paying the income. Now, both taxpayers, i.e. below the age of 60 years and above 60 years, should use the same common form and avoid relevant income from being subjected to TDS. The form is meant only for those taxpayers whose estimated total income for the tax year is likely to be nil and don't want tax to be deducted at source, subject to certain conditions.

Reporting and record retentions

The Income Tax Rules, 2026, rest an obligation on the post offices for reporting and retention of these forms. Accordingly, upon receipt of Form 97, the recipient shall verify the identity, ensure its completeness, duly signed and preserve it for a period of six years from the end of the financial year, in which the transaction was undertaken. The Head Postmaster shall report the details to the Income Tax Department.

Similarly, in the case of Form 121, it should be preserved for a period of seven years from the end of the tax year, in which the declaration is received. The Head Postmaster shall manually allot a 26-character unique number to each declaration received from the depositor during every quarter of the financial year. A TDS statement for non-tax deduction cases is required to be filed quarterly by the 7th of the month following the quarter, as per prescribed rules.

The revised and updated regulations are in line with the new Income Tax Rules, 2026, which came into force from April 1, 2026. From now on, all post office customers should adhere to these changes and comply with them to carry out day-to-day transactions smoothly.

VCs bet on 10-minute home help for tackling household chores

Broader home services sector is projected to approach $100 bn by 2030

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

The 10-minute delivery playbook is now moving into homes. Quick home services platforms Pronto and Snabbit have together raised over $100 million — $45 million and $56 million, respectively — in recent months. Both are scaling across India, sending cleaners, laundry staff, and dishwashing help to doorsteps in 10-30 minutes. VCs are backing the space for its size and untapped opportunity.

Recently, Pronto raised $20 million from venture capitalist Lachy Groom, and two months ago, the quick home services startup raised $25 million from Epiq Capital and General Catalyst, among others. Within a few months, the company's valuation doubled to $200 million. "This suggests confidence in both Pronto and the broader quick home services market. At the same time, the real test will be consistency in service quality, repeat usage, pricing and operational execution. In this category, long-term growth will likely depend on how well platforms balance customer experience with scalable and reliable service ecosystems," Somdutta Singh, Serial Entrepreneur, and Founder and CEO of Assiduus Global, said.

DH spoke to Pronto and Snabbit, apart from other venture capitalists, to understand the fast-growing instant home services market. According to Singh, Urban Company, Pronto and Snabbit together reached 10.4 million MAUs (monthly active users) in March, which shows that consumers are beginning to use these services more regularly. The market is moving into daily household support like cleaning, laundry and kitchen prep. "The opportunity is strong because Indian households already depend heavily on informal home help. Platforms can bring reliability, speed and structure to this demand. As the category scales, companies that build strong customer trust, efficient operations and supportive ecosystems for service professionals are likely to see stronger long-term adoption," she added.

At 22, Anjali Sardana founded Pronto in February 2025. Within 15 months of launch, Pronto had scaled to 10 cities, 26,000 daily bookings, 6,500 trained and background-verified Pronto professionals, and about $60 million in total capital raised at a $200 million post-money valuation.

"We are planning to go deeper into the cities where we already operate to further strengthen our presence and customer experience. We are also hiring across different functions and broadening our supply infrastructure. A meaningful portion of the capital is going into our training programmes and into opening additional hubs within the neighbourhoods we currently serve. We are investing heavily in the technology infrastructure that holds the platform together as volumes grow," Anjali said.

On the supply side, Pronto has gone from 1,440 Pros in January to about 6,500 today.

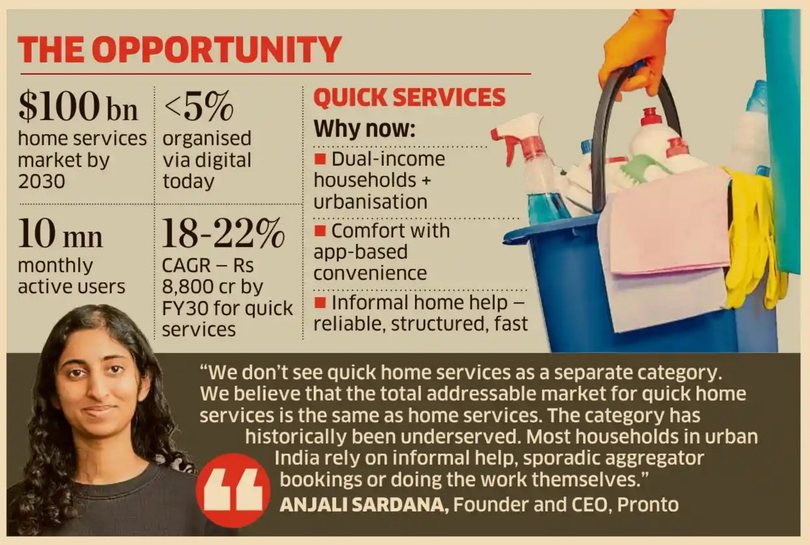
Founded in 2024 by Aayush Agarwal, Snabbit is currently facilitating about 40,000 jobs per day across its operating markets. It recently crossed the 1 million jobs a month milestone in March 2026. It currently operates across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, and Thane), Delhi NCR (Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, and Ghaziabad), Pune, Hyderabad and Bengaluru, covering more than 140 micro-markets.

Going forward, its focus is on deepening density within existing micro-markets, expanding across more neighbourhood clusters within current cities and building presence across the country's top-10 metros.

Snabbit recently shifted its headquarters from Mumbai to Bengaluru, to tap into the city's tech talent pool.

A Snabbit spokesperson said they are also continuing to invest in service reliability, operational efficiency and expert-centric infrastructure, including safety systems and workflow tooling that can support sustainable long-term scale for the category. "At a broader level, we believe quick home services has the potential to become a large, high-frequency consumer behaviour category in India, similar to what quick commerce achieved for grocery and daily needs delivery," the spokesperson said.

Snabbit believes quick home services represent one of the largest untapped consumer internet opportunities in India. The broader home services sector is projected to approach $100 billion by 2030, while less than 5% of the market is currently organised through digital platforms.


THE OPPORTUNITY
$100 bn
home services market by 2030
<5%
organised via digital today
10 mn
monthly active users
18-22%
CAGR – Rs 8,800 cr by FY30 for quick services
QUICK SERVICES
Why now:
Dual-income households + urbanisation
Comfort with app-based convenience
Informal home help – reliable, structured, fast
"We don't see quick home services as a separate category. We believe that the total addressable market for quick home services is the same as home services. The category has historically been underserved. Most households in urban India rely on informal help, sporadic aggregator bookings or doing the work themselves."
ANJALI SARDANA, Founder and CEO, Pronto

Informal and underserved market

Despite being a large and highly-frequent consumer need, the category remains fragmented, informal and underserved from a technology and reliability standpoint.

At the same time, this category is powered by a massive, but historically invisible workforce, especially women whose labour has long-remained outside formal, structured systems, said Snabbit, which currently works with more than 15,000 experts across its operating markets.

Recently, in its report, BofA Securities said InstaHelp has the potential to be a stock price driver for Urban Company, just the way Blinkit was to Eternal's stock price. It estimates the addressable market of InstaHelp to be higher than UC's core business by FY30.

Last year, Urban Company launched InstaHelp. It has fulfilled 2.7 million orders in Q4, with March alone crossing 1.1 million orders.

In his letter to shareholders, Abhiraj Singh Bhal, Founder and CEO of Urban Company said InstaHelp can become a large, strategically-important vertical, and that they are deliberately investing ahead of the curve to capture that opportunity.

From near-zero at the start of FY26, the company exited Q4 at 2.7 million orders and Rs 40 crore of NTV (Net Transaction Value). Q4 Adjusted EBITDA loss was Rs (119) crore, reflecting two-sided subsidies to densify the network, supply onboarding, and marketing for new trials. "Losses will stay elevated in coming quarters, as we invest to cement leadership," Bhal said.

All these platforms said they see huge opportunities ahead of them in this particular market.

"The quick service market is being driven by rising dual-income households, urbanisation and growing comfort with app-based convenience, which has led the ecosystem to witness over 10 million monthly active users. What this market is solving for is not just getting support or service a click away, it is solving and structuring an age-old traditional market by bringing in timeliness, framework and redressal," Archana Jahagirdar, MD and CEO, Rukam Capital, said.

Owing to the convenience it offers, the segment is projected to grow at a rate of 18-22% to reach Rs 8,500-8,800 crore by F30. The platforms that solve and standardise the quality of the service, institutionalise at scale and manage to move beyond metros will own a generational category, Jahagirdar added.

WEEK AHEAD

Equity markets likely to remain sideways

Last week, equity markets remained under pressure amid heightened geopolitical uncertainty

SIDDAHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equity markets are expected to remain sideways within a broader range. With the earnings season nearing completion, market focus is gradually shifting back toward global macros, geopolitical developments and policy-related triggers. Persistent foreign outflows, elevated crude oil prices (around $109 per barrel) and the Indian rupee slipping to fresh record lows (₹96.05/USD) continue to pose key macro risks for domestic markets. However, a broadly in-line to positive Q4 earnings season, along with proactive government measures to manage external pressures—including steps to curb non-essential imports, stabilise domestic supply and contain inflationary risks—are providing some support to overall market sentiment. At the same time, the lack of any visible resolution in the West Asia conflict continues to keep global investors on edge and uncertainty elevated across financial markets.

Key monitorables for next week include US CPI and PPI data, India's April trade data, and US crude inventory figures.

Last week, equity markets remained under pressure amid heightened geopolitical uncertainty, persistent foreign outflows and concerns around elevated crude oil prices. The Nifty50 declined 2.2%, while broader markets saw sharper correction, with the Nifty Midcap100 falling 2.2% and the Nifty Smallcap100 declining 4.6%, reflecting a clear risk-off sentiment and profit booking in broader markets. Sectorally, performance remained mixed. Nifty Pharma (+2.2%) emerged as the top gainer, supported by defensive positioning and rupee depreciation benefiting export-oriented earnings, followed by Nifty Metal (+1.9%), aided by strength in global base metal prices and improved trade sentiment. On the downside, Nifty Realty (-8.2%) was the worst performer amid concerns around higher interest rates, weaker liquidity sentiment and profit booking, while Nifty IT (-5.7%) witnessed sharp correction due to concerns around global growth, elevated US yields and continued pressure on technology spending outlook. Auto (-4.4%), Bank (-2.9%) and Energy (-2.4%) also ended lower, reflecting concerns around demand moderation, FII-led selling in financials and the impact of elevated crude prices on broader corporate margins.

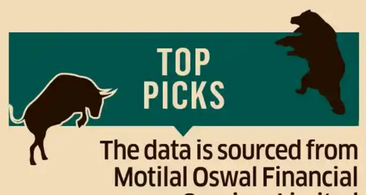
The Indian rupee remains under pressure, hovering near record lows at around 96 against the US dollar, driven by persistent FII outflows, elevated US bond yields and sustained dollar demand from oil importers. The higher-for-longer US interest rate environment continues to attract capital toward dollar-denominated assets, while elevated Brent crude is worsening India's import bill and stoking imported inflation risks, thereby limiting the RBI's flexibility for aggressive rate cuts. While the market has priced in some of these pressures, continued RBI intervention to stabilise the currency could tighten domestic liquidity conditions further. Until crude meaningfully corrects, export-oriented sectors may continue to outperform relative to import-dependent and discretionary consumption segments. Adding to macro concerns, India's wholesale inflation surged to a 42-month high of 8.3% in April, raising concerns around persistent cost pressures, margin compression and the possibility of a delayed rate-cut cycle by the RBI.

In response to these structural pressures, the government's recent decision to raise customs duties on gold and silver to 15% is aimed at curbing non-essential imports and protecting foreign exchange reserves. The move is structurally positive for commodity exchanges such as MCX, where heightened volatility typically supports trading activity, and may also benefit gold-financing firms through improved collateral values. However, organised jewellery players could face near-term demand disruption and margin pressure as higher costs are passed on to consumers. Metal stocks also witnessed strong momentum this week, led by copper crossing a record $14,000 per tonne on the LME. Global trade sentiment may also improve following the Trump–Xi summit in Beijing.

Sectorally, defence, pharma and metals are likely to remain in focus. Defence stocks continue to benefit from strong earnings visibility, improving domestic order inflows and expectations of incremental bilateral defence cooperation during Prime Minister Modi's upcoming international engagements.

Overall, while intermittent recoveries may emerge, market sentiment is likely to remain highly sensitive to developments in West Asia, movements in crude oil prices, currency trends and foreign fund flows.

(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, MOFSL)



Syrma SGS (ID: SYRMA) — BUY
Upside +28%** | Last close ₹1,016 | Target: ₹1,300*

Max Financials (ID: MFSL) — BUY
Upside +24%** | Last close ₹1,601 | Target: ₹1,980*

Gravitas (ID: GRAVITA) — BUY
Upside +30%** | Last close ₹1,693 | Target: ₹2,200*

Jindal Steel (ID: JINDALSTEL) — BUY
Upside +18%** | Last close ₹1,228 | Target: ₹1,450*

Privi Speciality (ID: PRIVISCL) — BUY
Upside +20%** | Last close ₹3,080 | Target: ₹3,710*

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

DH REVIEW

OnePlus Nord CE6 Lite: A cost-effective mid-ranger

ROHIT K V N
BENGALURU, DHNS

Recently, OnePlus launched the new Nord CE6 Lite series in India.

The phone is available in three variants — 6GB RAM + 128GB storage, 8GB RAM + 128GB storage, and 8GB RAM + 256GB storage — for Rs 20,999, Rs 22,999 and Rs 25,999, respectively.

Design, build quality and display

The OnePlus Nord CE6 Lite comes in a regular candy bar design, featuring a flat display panel and curved corners.

On the back, it features a plastic-based cover panel with a frosted glass-like matte finish. It offers a good grip, and also does a fine job with repelling fingerprint smudges. The phone also features MIL-STD-810H military-grade durability certification and IP64 rating, meaning it can withstand accidental water splashes and is protected against light dust intrusions.

OnePlus a free silicone case in the box. It is of premium quality and also comes with raised lips around the display panel, which ensures the display doesn't crack during an accidental drop on a hard, flat surface. Additionally, the device comes pre-fitted with a screen guard.

The OnePlus Nord CEW6 Lite comes in two colours — vivid mint and hyper black. It sports a 6.72-inch full HD+ (2400 x 1080p) LCD IPS screen, with 30-144Hz adaptive refresh rate, pixel density of 392 ppi and support up to 1,000 nits peak brightness.

SPEC SHEET
Display: 6.72-inch FHD+ 144Hz display with up to 1,000 nits brightness
Camera: 50MP AI dual camera, IP64 rating & MIL-STD-810H durability
Battery: 7,000mAh battery with 45W fast-charging support
Price: Starts at Rs 20,999 available in 6GB+128GB, 8GB+128GB & 8GB+256GB
Processor: MediaTek Dimensity 7400 Apex chipset, with up to 256GB storage

The display is good enough to consume multimedia content or scroll on social media platforms indoors. But, outdoors, under direct sunlight, users will face a reflection issue, and will have to set the display to maximum brightness and get the device closer to look at the screen more clearly.

It comes with hybrid dual-SIM slots (nano SIM-1 + nano SIM-2 or microSD card), a Type-C USB port, stereo speakers and a side-mounted fingerprint sensor. The latter works fine with a low false rejection rate.

Performance

The device is powered by a 4nm-class MediaTek Dimensity 7400 Apex octa-core processor with Mali-G615 MC2 GPU, 6GB/8GB LPDDR4X RAM, with 128GB/256GB (UFS 3.1) storage (expandable up to 2TB).

The device comes with a 5300mm2 large vapour chamber for efficient heat dissipation when performing heavy-duty tasks, such as running GenAI apps like Gemini and ChatGPT. The Nord CE6 Lite runs on Android 16-based OxygenOS 16. It is guaranteed to get two OS updates and four years of security patches going up to 2030.

The device houses a big 7,000mAh battery. Under normal usage, it can easily last for a day and a half. With a 45W SuperVOOC fast-charger in the box, it will take around one-and-half hours from zero to 100%.

Photography

The Nord CE6 Lite features a dual-camera module — a main 50MP (with 1/2.88-inch Omnivision OV50D40 sensor, f/1.8 aperture, EIS: Electronic Image Stabilisation), and a 2MP (f/2.4) monochrome camera with LED flash on the back.

The phone takes pretty decent-quality photos in sunlight, and performs admirably-well with portrait mode, and even in close range. It supports 2x optical zoom and can digitally zoom up to 10X. However, the photos begin to accumulate noise beyond 5X zoom. It also boasts of GenAI tools, including AI Portrait Glow, AI Reframe, AI Reflection Eraser, AI Detail Boost, AI Unblur, AI Perfect Shot, and AI Eraser. The primary camera on the back can record 4K videos at 30 fps. On the front, it has an 8MP(f/2.0) camera, which takes good selfies in daylight. It can also record full HD (1080p) videos at 30 fps.

Final thoughts

The OnePlus Nord CE6 Lite is a value-for-money offering. It comes with solid build quality, decent display, reasonably reliable camera, and most-importantly, delivers on long battery life.

GPS, panic button in public service vehicles must: SC to states, UTs

Says no vehicle shall be granted a fitness certificate or permit without these devices

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court has directed all the states and Union Territories to ensure installation of vehicle location tracking devices (VLTD) and panic buttons in a time-bound and verifiable manner in both new and existing public service vehicles.

"What is disturbing is the fact that less than 1% of transport vehicles have this vehicle location tracking device. This vehicle location tracking device is something which would ensure the safety of passengers, more particularly, women, elderly persons and children," a bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and K V Vishwanathan said.

Ordering strict enforcement of Rule 125H of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, the court directed the state governments and UTs that no public service vehicle be granted a fitness certificate under Section 56 or permit under Section 66 of the MV Act without verified installation of vehicle location tracking device (VLTD) and emergency buttons and its reflection in Vahan app.

SAFETY CONCERN

- Says location tracking device will ensure the safety of passengers, especially women, the elderly, and children
- Directs to ensure retrofitting of these devices in public service vehicles registered up to December 31, 2018

"We also direct all the States/UTs to ensure retrofitting of VLTDs and panic buttons in public service vehicles registered up to December 31, 2018, in line with the underlying objective of Rule 125H of the CMVR, so as to enhance the safety of the passengers in view of the proviso to Rule 125H of the CMVR," it said.

Real-time monitoring

The court also directed all States/UTs to ensure integration of VLTD installation and functionality with the Vahan database for real-time compliance monitoring.

The court's order came on May 13 on suggestions made by amicus curiae senior advocate Gaurav Agrawal.

Agarwal highlighted that states like Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and others have set up state-level command centres and 100+ incidents have been resolved timely due to the alerts sent by panic buttons and location tracking.

Manipur hostage crisis deepens with Naga, Kuki protest threats

GUWAHATI, DHNS: The hostage crisis in Manipur deepened on Sunday with Naga and Kuki organisations announcing tough action as 20 hostages remained untraceable.

As security forces could not find the six missing Nagas within its revised deadline of 6 pm on Sunday, the United Naga Council (UNC) announced an inter-district economic blockade along the National Highways in the Naga areas with immediate effect. The blockade is likely to affect movement of the Kukis on the highways.

The Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), an apex body of Kukis, decided to extend the "shutdown" by another 48 hours given the government's alleged failure to secure the release of 14 Kuki men.

"Kuki Inpi Manipur reiterates that the continued silence and inaction of the authorities... is deeply unfortunate and unacceptable. The government must act with urgency and responsibility before the situation deteriorates further," KIM information secretary Janghaolun Haokip said.

The state government said an "all-out effort" was underway to secure their safe release, but the tension increased in the hills as there was no breakthrough even on Sunday.

Gadchiroli now Maoist-free as five cadres surrender

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

In a significant breakthrough against Left Wing Extremism (LWE), Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district has been declared free of armed Naxal cadres, as over the weekend, five armed Naxal cadres from the district surrendered before the police, and joined the mainstream.

In addition, eight armed Maoist cadres from Maharashtra and neighbouring Chhattisgarh and Telangana states were arrested jointly by the Gadchiroli Police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The surrender took place under 'Operation Antim Prahar'.

It may be recalled that the Centre had launched a nationwide campaign to make India free of Naxalism by 31 March 2026.

"The operation was launched on May 2 and culminated in the surrender of five Naxals," Superintendent of Police M Ramesh said.

"As of today, we can state that no armed Naxalite cadres are operating in Gadchiroli. No Maoist figure remains on the district's official 'wanted' records," he said, adding that anti-Naxal operations would continue over the next two to three years.

"During the intensive special search operations, a large cache of arms and ammunition, along with cash amounting to Rs 65.34 lakh, was seized. Maoist accused involved in the Fodewada encounter have also been arrested, dealing a decisive blow to Maoist activities in Gadchiroli district," he said.

The surrendered cadres collectively carried a bounty of Rs 38 lakh.

Since the 1980s, Gadchiroli, owing to its geography and nearly 76% forest cover, has become part of the 'Red Corridor' stretching from Pashupati to Tirupati and influenced by Naxal groups.

Throwing non-veg waste into Ganga may hurt sentiments: HC on iftar party row

PRAYAGRAJ, PTI: The Allahabad High Court has observed that throwing non-vegetarian food waste into the river Ganga could hurt religious sentiments of the Hindu community.

While granting bail to five persons accused of throwing leftovers into the river during an iftar party on a boat in Varanasi, Justice Rajiv Lochan Shukla said, "The applicants are apologetic for their actions and even their families also regret the pain that had been caused to the society at large."

The court said, "Taking note of the entire facts and circumstances of the case, the lack of criminal antecedents of the applicants, the period of detention already undergone and also the apology expressed, as recorded above, prima facie a case for bail is made out."

In an order passed on May 15, Justice Shukla granted bail to the accused-applicants — Mohammad Azad Ali, Mohammad Tahseem, Nihal Afridi, Mohammad Tauseef Ahmad, and Mohammad Anas.

According to the order, the present case involves members of the Muslim community having an iftar party. "During the said Iftar party, while partaking of food, non-vegetarian food is said to have been consumed by the members of the Muslim community, who are then alleged to have thrown the remains into the River Ganges. This fact in the dispassionate opinion of the Court could rightly be said to hurt religious sentiments of the Hindu community," the court observed.

The applicants, in jail since March 17 have expressed their regrets and have also undertaken never to repeat any such act in future.

In the same case, Justice Jitendra Kumar Sinha on May 15 granted bail to three other accused.

The FIR was lodged on March 16 based on a complaint filed by Rajat Jaiswal, the president of the Varanasi chapter of the BJP Yuva Morcha, claiming that the incident hurt the sentiments of the Hindus.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie

THE COLD ISN'T SO BAD SINCE I GOT THIS RECHARGEABLE HEATED VEST UNDER MY COAT
AND THESE BATTERY-HEATED PANTS AND BOOTS
BY THE TIME HE GETS HOME, HE SHOULD BE WELL-DONE!

Hagar The Horrible

Beetle Bailey

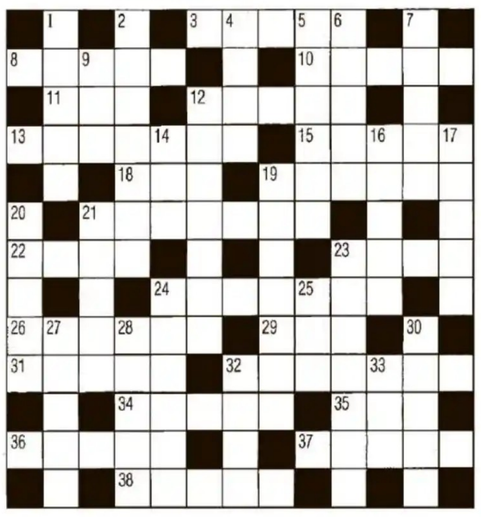
WOW, BEETLE! YOU HIT THE BULLSEYE THREE TIMES IN A ROW! YOU COULD BE A SNIPER!
POW! POW! POW!
NOW YOU COMPLETELY MISSED THE TARGET THREE TIMES!
POW! POW! POW!
GREG+MORT WALKER

Peanuts

I'M WRITING A STORY FOR SCHOOL
IT'S ALL ABOUT SANTA CLAUS AND HIS RAIN GEAR
ARE YOU SURE THAT'S RIGHT?
OF COURSE, I'M SURE!
I WONDER IF THAT INCLUDES A FOLDING UMBRELLA..
WHAT'D YOU SAY?

Marvin

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12418



CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 Cheat at every turn? (5)
8 Distressed at one's pay reduction being increased? (3,2)
10 Person directing the team bus? (5)
11 A bird elephants should be wary of! (3)
12 In the end, perhaps, the modus operandi seems fiendish! (5)
13 Where one labours to get an operation? (7)
15 Occasions when I'm stuck in a setback (5)
18 Transatlantic record? (3)
19 Assent to the destruction of some nice cedars (6)
21 Because flesh is weak? (7)
22 Devilish quotation from a palimpsest (4)
23 Low noises (4)
24 It's for aches and pains, perhaps, taking in the tax people (7)
26 Novel place for cricket? (6)
29 Ladder of success in the theatre (3)
31 Special card for one to run round with (5)
32 Argued about the high speed, indeed! (7)
34 Nine is the one to be on! (5)
35 Colour of pure damask (3)
36 Feed the fires of the potteries (5)
37 All set for about a day, perhaps (5)
38 As yet developing growth on grape vine (5)

DOWN
1 smashing hour by northern lake (5)
2 Yields a dollar to the boy (7)
4 Cry because it's only a baby piano (4)
5 Is such broth alcoholic? (6)
6 Does it stimulate you to be a bit nice? (5)
7 Worked for the electricity man (5)
9 It's high in distortion (3)
12 Barking swimmer? (7)
14 Resolute little chap (3)
16 As consumed by me and half London (5)
17 You may feel it's common (5)
19 Hoped to take a boy to Paris, maybe (7)
20 When burglars did the wrong thing (5)
21 It can make a hole in bad pears (5)
23 Train 'em to use a turret (7)
24 PM, a teetotaler and a general (6)
25 Polish up a Cherubini piece (3)
27 Heartbreak in space (5)
28 Unstable movie character? (5)
30 He's presumably bearable (5)
32 Being worn, they won't work (4)
33 In a white area, it stains brown (3)

ACROSS
3 Cults (5)
8 Stair part (5)
10 Era (5)
11 Boy's name (3)
12 Musical instrument (5)
13 Terse (7)
15 Short letters (5)
18 Pitch (3)
19 Period of time (6)
21 Mythical winged horse (7)
22 Broadcasts (4)
23 Stink (4)
24 Spotty disease (7)
26 Runs away to wed (6)
29 Witch (3)
31 Warning device (5)
32 Kings, queens, etc. (7)
34 Capital of Morocco (5)
35 Overly (3)
36 Garret (5)
37 Make amends or reparation (5)
38 Horizontal (5)

DOWN
1 Essential (5)
2 Relegates (7)
4 Heroic (4)
5 Sport (6)
6 Cutlery item (5)
7 Group of eight (5)
9 So or thus (3)
12 Corsairs (7)
14 Scold constantly (3)
16 Melodies (5)
17 Looks for (5)
19 Photo of a criminal (3,4)
20 Rescues (5)
21 Previous (5)
23 Meeting for boat races (7)
24 Threaten (6)
25 Produce eggs (3)
27 Raises (5)
28 Danger (5)
30 Fourteen pounds (5)
32 Speed contest (4)
33 Lav (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2680

ACROSS: 1 Bequest, 5 Haggard, 9 Leisure, 10 Mindful, 11 Amble, 12 Tall story, 13 Keep at bay, 15 Dated, 16 Phase, 18 Costa Rica, 21 On the spot, 24 Heart, 25 Assured, 26 Warfare, 27 Central, 28 Repress.

DOWN: 1 Bulwark, 2 Quibble, 3 Enumerate, 4 Treat, 5 Himalayas, 6 Genus, 7 Affront, 8 Delayed, 14 Back-pedal, 15 Deathtrap, 16 Prosaic, 17 Artisan, 19 In a daze, 20 Artless, 22 Error, 23 Tower.

◆ SU-DO-KU-6908 ◆

								9
	9				4	5		8
			9	5	2		6	
	5				6	9		
2	6			3			1	4
		4	1				5	
	3		4	8	1			
5		1	6				3	
9								

hard

SOLUTION TO 6907

9	7	8	5	6	4	1	3	2
4	2	6	8	1	3	9	7	5
3	1	5	7	2	9	6	8	4
8	6	4	2	9	1	7	5	3
7	9	3	4	8	5	2	1	6
1	5	2	3	7	6	8	4	9
6	3	1	9	5	7	4	2	8
5	8	7	6	4	2	3	9	1
2	4	9	1	3	8	5	6	7

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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D2	N1	M3	N1	A1	A1	S1	5th Letter Triple	RACK 1
N1	W4	D2	D2	D2	E1	E1		RACK 2
I1	R1	W4	B3	D2	E1	A1	Double Word Score	RACK 3
C3	P3	R1	R1	H4	E1	E1		RACK 4

PAR SCORE 140-150
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

P3	R1	O1	T1	O1	N1	S1	RACK 1 =	59
S1	O1	N1	N1	E1	T1	S1	RACK 2 =	64
C3	R1	E1	N1	A1	T1	E1	RACK 3 =	62
M3	E1	A1	D2	O1	W4		RACK 4 =	12
							JUDD'S TOTAL	197

PAR SCORE 130-140

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

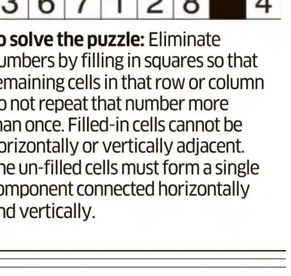
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NUAAS

SHKIW

MBTGIA

DCIPTE


We can offer your business a pre-installation deal. What do you say?
I do love the location and the visibility. We'll do it!
WHEN THEY OFFERED HER DISCOUNTED ADVERTISING ON THE NEW BILLBOARD, SHE SAID ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print your answer here: _____ (Answers tomorrow)

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Saturday's Jumbles: SPELL SKULL WETTER AMOEBA
Answer: The cosmetology student missed her exam and would need to take a — MAKEUP TEST

HITORI-3362

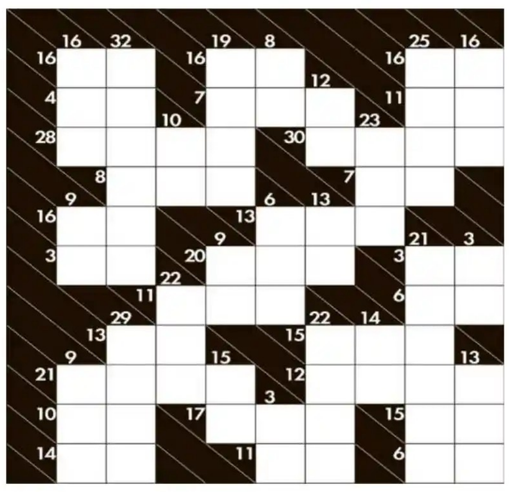
5	4	7	8	2	1	6	4
4	7	6	3	8	1	3	6
7	5	1	4	1	3	4	5
8	2	3	4	6	1	5	1
2	4	1	5	3	6	1	4
1	8	2	4	5	4	4	7
4	5	1	1	4	7	4	6
8	6	4	7	5	5	2	1

SOLUTION TO 3361

2	5	4	8	7	■	1	■
4	■	1	■	3	7	2	8
■	4	■	3	6	■	5	■
8	1	6	5	■	4	3	7
5	7	8	■	1	■	6	■
■	8	■	2	4	5	7	3
6	■	2	■	5	■	8	1
3	6	7	1	2	8	■	4

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3362



SOLUTION TO 3361

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3919

■								■
2	■		3	5			■	7
		■				■		
	3	5	4		■	1		
				■	7		9	
			5	1	2			
		4			1	8		
	1						■	
■	9		8			6		■

SOLUTION TO 3918

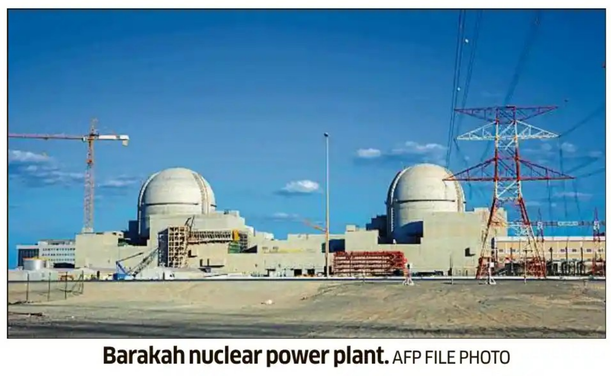
3	6	7	8	4	1	2	9	5
1	9	5	2	6	7	3	4	8
8	2	4	5	3	9	1	6	7
6	5	9	7	8	3	4	1	2
7	8	3	1	2	4	9	5	6
2	4	1	6	9	5	8	7	3
5	1	8	9	7	2	6	3	4
4	7	2	3	1	6	5	8	9
9	3	6	4	5	8	7	2	1

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

Drone strike sparks fire on edge of UAE's nuclear plant

Highlights risk of renewed war as Iran ceasefire remains tenuous

DUBAI, AP



Barakah nuclear power plant. AFP FILE PHOTO

A drone strike targeted the United Arab Emirates' sole nuclear power plant on Sunday, sparking a fire on its perimeter. There were no reports of injuries or radiological release, but it highlighted the risk of renewed war as the Iran ceasefire remains tenuous.

No one immediately claimed responsibility, and the UAE did not blame anyone. It has, however, accused Iran of launching multiple drone and missile attacks in recent days as tensions have risen over the Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy waterway that Iran still has in a chokehold.

The United States is blockading Iranian ports, and diplomatic efforts aimed at a more durable peace have repeatedly faltered. The UAE has meanwhile hosted air defences and personnel from Israel, which joined the US in the February 28 attack that sparked the war.

US President Donald Trump has suggested hostilities could resume, and Iranian state television has repeatedly aired segments with anchors holding Kalashnikov-style rifles in an effort to prepare the public for war. Fighting has also heated up between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon despite a nominal ceasefire there, further straining the wider truce.

Barakah plant can provide a quarter of the UAE's energy

The $20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant was built by the UAE with the help of South Korea and went online in 2020. It is the first and only nuclear power plant in the Arab world and can provide a quarter of all the energy needs in the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms.

The UAE's nuclear regulator said the fire didn't affect plant safety. "All units are operating as normal," the organisation wrote on X.

At UN, India flags concerns over targeting of vessels in Strait

UNITED NATIONS, PTI: Targeting commercial shipping, endangering civilian crew and impeding freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz is "unacceptable", India's Permanent Representative to the UN Parvathaneni Harish has said.

Harish's remarks at a special meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC) on safeguarding energy and supply flows came days after an India-flagged commercial vessel came under attack off the coast of Oman.

Omani authorities rescued all 14 crew members of the vessel sailing from Somalia, but it was not immediately known who carried out the strike.

India junks curbs on minority rights, media freedom claims

Says such doubts arise out of lack of understanding of the country

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is conferred Sweden's Royal Order of the Polar Star, the highest honour awarded by the Scandinavian nation to a head of government, by Crown Princess Victoria in Gothenburg. Modi is the first Asian leader to receive the award. PTI

India has rejected outright the allegations of declining freedom of expression and curbs on the rights of minorities, saying such apprehensions arise out of lack of understanding of the country, which has a vibrant democracy.

Replying to a question from a journalist of the Dutch newspaper, *De Volkskrant*, Sibi George, the Secretary (West) at the Ministry of External Affairs, said, "We face these kinds of questions because of the lack of understanding of the person who asks the question."

The journalist in The Hague asked for New Delhi's response to the Netherlands Prime Minister Rob Jetten's purported statement during his meeting with Narendra Modi that his country and the European Union were worried about reports on declining press freedom and curbs on the rights of Muslims and other minority communities in India.

He went on to say that four religions — Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism — which originated in India are flourishing.

Referring to the participation of over 90% electorates in the recent elections in India, George said, "It's a vibrant democracy. So, we need to have more understanding of people. See, when we talk about reforms and transformation, there was reform in India, India was transformed, and India performed. But it is also important for us to inform. That is what we are doing."

US nuke industry delegation in India to explore opportunities

WASHINGTON, PTI: A delegation of senior executives from the American nuclear industry is visiting India this week to explore areas of cooperation after New Delhi opened up the tightly-controlled sector for private players.

The 20-member US Executive Nuclear Industry Delegation will be visiting New Delhi and Mumbai from May 18-21. The team will meet Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, officials from the Department of Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited apart from the leaders from several private sector companies interested in India's civil nuclear sector.

"The goal is to understand how American and Indian companies can further collaborate to support project development, strengthen supply chains, and build long-term commercial partnerships," the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) said.

WHO declares emergency as Ebola outbreak kills more than 80 in DR Congo

KINSHASA, AFP

The World Health Organization declared an international health emergency on Sunday over an outbreak of an Ebola strain in the Democratic Republic of Congo that has killed more than 80 and for which there is no vaccine.

Fears of further spread grew when a laboratory on Sunday confirmed a case in the major eastern DRC city of Goma, which is controlled by the Rwanda-backed M23 militia.

A total of 88 deaths and 336 suspected cases of the highly contagious haemorrhagic fever have so far been reported, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC Africa) said in an update on Saturday.

"A positive case in Goma has been confirmed by tests carried out by the laboratory. It involves the wife of a man who died of Ebola in Bunia, who travelled to Goma after her husband's death whilst already infected," Professor Jean-Jacques Muyembe, director of the Congolese National Institute for Biomedical Research (INRB), told AFP.

WHO director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus expressed deep disquiet as the reported cases rise.

"I determine that the epidemic constitutes a public health emergency of international concern," Ghebreyesus posted to X, albeit adding that as yet it "does not meet the criteria of pandemic emergency" as defined by existing international health regulations (IHR).

As things stand therefore, the Geneva-based WHO has declared its second-highest level of alert under IHR -- a pandemic being the highest -- with the global health body warning the scale of the current outbreak remains unclear.

"There are significant uncertainties to the true number of infected persons and geographic spread," the WHO noted.

Protest against Nepal govt's eviction drive

KATHMANDU, PTI: Thousands of landless squatters on Sunday organised a massive rally in Lumbini province in southern Nepal to protest the government's ongoing eviction drive that they claim has displaced millions of people across the country, including in Kathmandu.

Nepal, especially the capital, has witnessed a series of protests by the people displaced during the eviction and demolition drive launched by the Prime Minister Balendra Shah-led government since April for beautification and environmental protection.

One Indian killed, 3 hurt in Kyiv drone strike on Moscow

NEW DELHI, DHNS

An Indian citizen working in Russia was killed and three others were injured in Moscow in the latest drone strikes by Ukraine, New Delhi's diplomatic mission in Moscow said on Sunday.

"One Indian worker has lost his life, and three others have been injured in a drone attack in the Moscow region earlier today," the Indian Embassy wrote on X. "The Embassy condoles the loss of life and is working with the company management and local authorities to provide necessary assistance to the workers."

Embassy officials visited the place where the Indian worker was killed and met the injured in the hospital.

The Embassy of Russia in New Delhi, too, extended its sympathy to those injured by the "Ukrainian attack on civilian facilities in the Moscow region".

According to preliminary reports, more than 12 people were injured in Moscow, while in the Moscow region, three were killed and six more injured, it added.

Russia and Ukraine have stepped up long-range drone and missile attacks in recent months.

Zaporizhzhia nuke plant hit

The Russia-installed management of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station said on Sunday that Ukrainian forces had shelled part of the facility for the second day running, damaging a transport workshop but causing no disruption to the plant's operations, reports Reuters.

The incident caused no injuries.

'China to buy at least $17 bn in US agri products'

WASHINGTON, REUTERS: China has committed to purchasing at least $17 billion of U.S. agricultural products in 2026, 2027 and 2028, the White House said in a fact sheet released on Sunday.

The commitment was made during meetings between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping last week, the White House said.

The $17 billion figure does not include the soybean purchase commitments China made in October 2025, the White House said.

SPORT

Iron Mirage wins War Hammer Million

BENGALURU RESULTS

P Prasanna Kumar-trained Iron Mirage, ridden by jockey Akshay Kumar, won the War Hammer Million in style, the feature event held here on Sunday.

1. Newmarket Plate 1200M: Breeze Bluster (Srinath Byregowda, Divya Jyothi C M, Campa Sharath and Rakesh Kumar) R Vaibhav 1, Embosom (Vinod Shinde) 2, Sling Shot (Faizan Khan) 3, Double Scotch (I Chisty) 4; WB: 4, Ns, 3/4L; T: 1:15.80; Tote: Rs 29w, 13, 23, 29p; Shp: Rs 61; Thp: Rs 71; Fc: Rs 347; Q: Rs 271; Tri: Rs 3245 & 1217; Exp: Rs 21,530 & 3690; TB: Lokanath Gowda; Fav: Breeze Bluster.

2. Sweet Memories Plate 1400M: Knotty Cruise (K Kamesh, Srikanth Badruka, K Balamukunda Das, D Mehta and M N Nambiar) Antony Raj 1, Turf Paradise (Ashhad Asbar) 2, Absolute Katrina (J H Arul) 3, Absolute Thunder (Sai Kiran) 4; WB: 2-1/4, 3, 3/4L; T: 1:25.79; Tote: Rs 26w, 12, 32, 51p; Shp: Rs 167; Thp: Rs 138; Fc: Rs 471; Q: Rs 172; Tri: Rs 5723 & 2452; Exp: Rs 47,902 & 20529; TB: P Prasanna Kumar; Fav: Tiger Bay.

3. Alhole Plate 1200M: Regal Reality (Villoo Poonawalla Racing Breeding Pvt Ltd Cyrus Poonawalla, Adar Poonawalla DT Racing, Mukul Sonawala and Chaduranga Kanthraj Urs) Akshay Kumar 1, Stellantis (Shreyas Singh) 2, Royal Deccan (Antony Raj) 3, Monterio (Alex Rozario) 4; WB: 3-1/2, 1-1/4, 3-1/2L; T: 1:13.26; Tote: Rs 13w; 10, 14p; Shp: Rs 19; Thp: Rs 27; Fc: Rs 24; Q: Rs 22; Tri: Rs 33 & 24; Exp: Rs 58 & 31; TB: SS Attaollahi; Fav: Regal Reality.

4. War Hammer Million 1400M: Iron Mirage (Meja Yugandhar, Capt Jamshed Appoo, K Manoj Kumar, Ashok Ranpise and DT Racing) Akshay Kumar 1, Moonveil (P Trevor) 2, Deep Respect (Suraj Narredu) 3, Monstera ((Alex Rozario) 4; WB: 2-1/2, 6-1/4, 1L; T: 1:24.25; Tote: Rs 17w; 12, 10p; Shp: Rs 19; Thp: Rs 24; Fc: Rs 27; Q: Rs 23; Tri: Rs 36 & 16; Exp: Rs 63 & 43; TB: P Prasanna Kumar; Fav: Iron Mirage.

5. Track Lighting Plate 1400M: Starzella (Capt Jamshed Appoo, K Narayan, P Prasanna Kumar, Dr Swaroop Kumar and Rustam Phiroze Mehta) P Trevor 1, Legacy Field (Akshay Kumar) 2, Cantarina (Suraj Narredu) 3, Exotic Black (Alex Rozario) 4; WB: 6, 2-1/4, 3L; T: 1:24.70; Tote: Rs 16w; 10, 13, 10p; Shp: Rs 28; Thp: Rs 32; Fc: Rs 36; Q: Rs 24; Tri: Rs 59 & 41; Exp: Rs 222 & 190; TB: P Prasanna Kumar; Fav: Starzella.

6. Racing Patrons Plate 1400M: Elysium (DT Racing and Mukul Sonawala, S R Sanas and Sarainaga Racing Pvt Ltd) Akshay Kumar 1, Hazel (P Trevor) 2, Silicon Star (Antony Raj) 3, Forseti (Faizan Khan) 4; WB: 6, 1-1/2, 1-1/2L; T: 1:25.89; Tote: Rs 16w; 12, 11, 11p; Shp: Rs 30; Thp: Rs 34; Fc: Rs 41; Q: Rs 32; Tri: Rs 66 & 25; Exp: Rs 492 & 249; TB: SS Attaollahi; Fav: Elysium.

Jackpot: Rs 319 & 78. **Mini-jackpot:** Rs 166. **I treble:** Rs 106. **II treble:** Rs 111.

BADMINTON THAILAND OPEN

Satwik-Chirag fall in final

Indian pair saves four championship points before losing to Leo-Daniel

BANGKOK, PTI

India's Chirag Shetty (right) and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy went down 12-21, 23-25 to Indonesia's Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin in the doubles final at the Thailand Open in Bangkok on Sunday. AFP

Star Indian pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty saved four championship points before going down fighting against Indonesia's Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin in a gripping men's doubles final to finish runners-up at the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament here on Sunday.

World No. 4 Satwik and Chirag, champions here in 2019 and 2024, looked off-colour in the opening game but showed great mental fortitude under pressure in the second to almost take the match to the decider before losing 12-21, 23-25 in a 53-minute summit clash.

It was another creditable finish for Satwik and Chirag, who have established themselves as India's most consistent doubles pair in recent years. For the Indian duo, who had missed some tournaments due to Satwik's shoulder injury, it was a third final appearance at the USD 475,000 event and their first of the season.

They had also finished runners-up at the China Masters and Hong Kong Open last year.

While the Indians returned to the podium once again, it proved to be a dream finish for Carnando and Marthin, who reunited for this tournament after two years following the latter's recovery from a long-term knee injury that required surgery.

It was also the Indonesians' first win over Satwik and Chirag, who had entered the contest with a 4-0 head-to-head record against them, with three of those victories coming in three-game matches.

The contest turned into a high-intensity affair marked by quick exchanges at the net and fierce front-court battles.

Antonsen crowned

Denmark's Anders Antonsen won the badminton men's singles final of the Thailand Open on Sunday, getting his revenge against homegrown Kunlavut Vitidsarn who defeated the Dane last year.

World-ranked No. 3 Antonsen won 9-21, 24-22, 21-18 in 1 hour 37 minutes in Bangkok on Sunday. The 29-year-old Dane entered the finals after a walkover win in the semifinals when world No. 1 Shi Yuqi of China withdrew. Shi exited the Malaysia Open early in January due to a back injury.

Fernandes equals PL assist record

LONDON, AFP

Bruno Fernandes equalled the Premier League record of 20 assists in a season as Manchester United secured third place with a 3-2 win over Nottingham Forest, while relegation-haunted West Ham prepare for their crucial clash with Newcastle on Sunday.

Fernandes moved alongside Thierry Henry and Kevin De Bruyne in the single-season assist list when his cross was turned in by Bryan Mbeumo for United's third goal at Old Trafford.

Mbeumo was also involved for the game's most controversial moment when his handball in the build-up to Matheus Cunha's strike went unpunished despite a VAR review.

Luke Shaw volleyed United in front after just five minutes, but Forest did level seven minutes into the second half when Elliot Anderson's cross was headed in by Morato.

United raced down the other end and Cunha swept home after the ball rebounded off Mbeumo's thigh onto his arm.

Fernandes' record-equalling moment arrived 14 minutes from full-time when Mbeumo prodded in his drilled cross for his first goal since February. Morgan Gibbs-White reduced the deficit in the 78th minute.

Results: Manchester United: 3 (Shaw 5th, Cunha 55th, Mbeumo 76th) bt Nottingham Forest: 2 (Morato 53rd, Gibbs-White 78th); Brentford: 2 (Ouattara 40th, 88th) drew with Crystal Palace: 2 (Sarr 6th, Wharton 52nd); Everton: 1 (Rohl 43rd) lt to Sunderland: 3 (Brobbey 59th, Le Fee 81st, Isidor 90+1); Leeds: 1 (Calvert-Lewin 90+6) bt Brighton: 0; Wolves: 1 (Mane 25th) drew with Fulham: 1 (Robinson 45+3).

Alonso named Chelsea boss

Chelsea appointed Xabi Alonso as the club's manager on Sunday on a four-year deal with the Spaniard the latest coach tasked with turning around the club's fortunes, reports AFP from London.

The Blues lost the FA Cup final to Manchester City on Saturday and lie ninth in the Premier League with two games of the campaign to go.

Bruno Fernandes

Jennifer Paes. X

Olympian Jennifer, Leander's mom, passes away

BENGALURU, DHNS: Jennifer Paes, former Olympian basketball player and mother of legendary tennis player Leander Paes, passed away on Sunday following a battle with cancer.

Jennifer (72), earlier known as Jennifer Dutton, was one of the pioneering figures in Indian women's basketball. She represented India at the 1972 Munich Olympics and later captained the Indian women's basketball team, inspiring generations of athletes with her dedication and achievements.

Jennifer belonged to one of India's most distinguished sporting families. Her former husband, the late Dr Vece Paes, was a member of the Indian hockey team that won bronze at the 1972 Munich Olympics, while her son Leander brought glory to the nation with his bronze medal in tennis at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Jennifer was the great-granddaughter of noted Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt.

The Karnataka State Basketball Association (KSBBA) as well K Govindaraj, President of FIBA Asia and Karnataka Olympic Association, condoled Jennifer's demise.

"Her contribution to Indian sports and her legacy as an outstanding athlete and inspiring mother will always be remembered," said a statement from KSBBA.

Alex Smalley

Smalley ahead of big chasing pack as wild final day showdown looms

NEWTOWN SQUARE (USA), AFP: Alex Smalley overcame a horrid start with seven birdies in the last 12 holes to seize a two-stroke lead after Saturday's third round of the PGA Championship.

The unheralded 29-year-old American, chasing his first PGA Tour title in only his fifth major start, fired a two-under-par 68 to stand on six-under 204 after 54 holes at Aronimink with an epic Sunday showdown in store.

A congested leaderboard saw 14 players atop the field at some point Saturday, with 21 players finishing within four strokes of Smalley -- eight of them major champions.

Smalley made bogeys on three of the first four holes, then bounced back with four birdies in the last six holes, including a 27-foot putt at 15 and a 13-footer at 18.

Jon Rahm, the 2021 US Open and 2023 Masters champion, closed with a bogey to shoot 67 and join a second-place pack on 206.

Standings (after round 3): 204: Alex Smalley (USA) 67-69-68; 206: Aaron Rai (Eng) 70-69-67, Nick Taylor (Can) 69-72-65, Jon Rahm (Esp) 69-70-67, Matthias Schmid (Ger) 69-72-65, Ludvig Aberg (Swe) 72-66-68; 207: Rory McIlroy (NIR) 74-67-66, Patrick Reed (USA) 68-72-67, Maverick McNealy (USA) 69-67-71, Xander Schauffele (USA) 68-73-66.

IPL 2026
10 TEAMS 13 VENUES 58 DAYS 74 MATCHES
"I have experienced guys who help me as a captain. Our motto is simple: one game at a time. We just want to do well in every match.
JITESH SHARMA, RCB STAND-IN CAPTAIN

RCB punch playoffs ticket

Venkatesh comes to the party in 23-run defeat of PBKS

DHARAMSALA, PTI

Royal Challengers Bengaluru held their nerve and survived a late onslaught to edge out Punjab Kings by 23 runs to become the first team to secure an IPL playoffs berth with an all-round performance here on Sunday.

Venkatesh Iyer blasted a spectacular 40-ball 73 not out and powered RCB to 222 for four. Virat Kohli (58 off 37 balls), Devdutt Padikkal (45 off 25 balls) and Tim David (28 off 12) were the other significant contributors for RCB after they were asked to bat first.

In reply, PBKS were stopped at 199 for eight after Shashank Singh's valiant 56 off 27 balls, the home team suffering its sixth consecutive defeat after a great start to the season.

In a daunting chase of 223, Punjab Kings endured a nervy start as RCB's pace attack kept the batters under pressure in the first 10 overs.

PBKS were jolted early when veteran seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar removed Priyansh Arya in the opening over, forcing the hosts on to the back foot immediately.

With the required rate hovering around 11-an-over from the outset, Punjab's batters were compelled to attack but RCB's disciplined bowling and sharp fielding denied the home side the momentum they were looking for.

Cooper Connolly and Prabhsimran Singh looked to counterattack with a few boundaries, but the visitors continued to chip away with timely breakthroughs.

Prabhsimran threw his bat at a Bhuvneshwar delivery way outside off and the edge flew to Padikkal in the slips. Skipper Shreyas Iyer too bit the dust inside the Powerplay. After reaching 35 off 22 balls, Suryansh Shedge hit an innocuous Suyash Sharma delivery to long-off, where Kohli completed a neat, flat catch.

However, Shashank kept up the fight with his bold hits, including three sixes in one over against Suyash, even as Jacob Bethell dropped Marcus Stoinis on 22, who too found the boundaries at will to keep PKBS in the hunt.

But Josh Hazlewood returned to dismiss Stoinis (37 off 25) with a full toss which the batter failed to put away.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Venkatesh Iyer scored a 40-ball 73 to star in his side's win over Punjab Kings in Dharamsala on Sunday. AFP

SCORE BOARD

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU: Jacob Bethell b Brar 11, Virat Kohli c Arya b Chahal 58, Devdutt Padikkal c Iyer b Brar 45, Venkatesh Iyer (not out) 73, Tim David c Brar b Arshdeep 28. Extras (W-5, NB-1, B-1) 7. **TOTAL (for 4 wkts, 20 overs) 222.**

Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-97, 3-157, 4-222.

Bowling: Arshdeep Singh 4-0-43-1, Azmatullah Omarzai 4-0-38-0, Harpreet Brar 4-0-35-2, Lockie Ferguson 3-0-43-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 3-0-42-1, Shashank Singh 2-0-20-0.

PUNJAB KINGS: Priyansh Arya c Shepherd b Bhuvneshwar 0, Prabhsimran Singh c Padikkal b Bhuvneshwar 2, Cooper Connolly c Bethell b Shepherd 37, Shreyas Iyer c Jitesh b Dar 1, Suryansh Shedge c Kohli b Suyash 35, Marcus Stoinis lbw Hazlewood 37, Shashank Singh c Kohli b Dar 56, Azmatullah Omarzai c David b Dar 14, Harpreet Brar (not out) 5. Extras (LB-4, W-8) 12. **TOTAL (for 8 wkts, 20 overs) 199.**

Fall of wkts: 1-1, 2-18, 3-19, 4-62, 5-93, 6-160, 7-194, 8-199.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-38-2, Josh Hazlewood 4-0-36-1, Rasikh Salam 4-0-36-3, Suyash Sharma 4-0-50-1, Romario Shepherd 1-0-8-1, Krunal Pandya 3-0-27-0.

Result: RCB won by 23 runs.

PoM: Venkatesh Iyer. **RCB's next match:** Vs SRH (May 22, Hyderabad).

Sunrisers look to rise above inconsistency

CHENNAI, PTI

With the playoffs qualification at stake, Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to rise above their batting inconsistencies against an equally desperate five-time champions Chennai Super Kings in their IPL match here on Monday.

Placed third in the points table with 14 points in 12 matches, SRH (NRR 0.331) need to win both their remaining two group stage games to avoid late hiccups in the journey towards the knockouts.

Even if they lose one of these two matches, SRH could still finish in the final four but the 2016 winners will need both Punjab Kings and Rajasthan Royals falter in at least one of their remaining two games. However, SRH's wobbly run does present the Pat Cummins-led side to put together a unified show especially at the business end of the tournament where they seem to have stuttered, losing two of their last three fixtures.

In their last outing against Gujarat Titans, SRH looked in control having restricted them to 168 for five on a tricky wicket but fell apart for a mere 86 against high quality pace bowling.

SRH's Abhishek Sharma has managed to score just 56 runs in his last three outings.

LIVE 7:30 PM

Before that, SRH had extended Punjab Kings' losing streak with a 33-run victory in a high-scoring game but it came after Kolkata Knight Riders had hammered them by seven wickets.

Meanwhile, the road ahead for CSK is not easy either even as they stand with a chance to finish with 16 points, but for that they will have to win their remaining two matches.

The Ruturaj Gaikwad-led side had slipped to the sixth spot following their loss to Lucknow Super Giants in their last outing, and they currently have 12 points from as many matches.

Even on Net Run Rate, CSK are behind in the race with a tally of 0.027.

POINTS TABLE

Team	Played	Won	Lost	NR	Pts	NRR
Royal Challengers (Q)	13	9	4	0	18	1.065
Gujarat Titans	13	8	5	0	16	0.400
Sunrisers Hyderabad	12	7	5	0	14	0.331
Punjab Kings	13	6	6	1	13	0.227
Rajasthan Royals	12	6	6	0	12	0.027
Chennai Super Kings	12	6	6	0	12	0.027
Delhi Capitals	13	6	7	0	12	-0.871
Kolkata Knight Riders	12	5	6	1	11	-0.038
Mumbai Indians	12	4	8	0	8	-0.504
Lucknow Super Giants	12	4	8	0	8	-0.701

India finish 11th in Asian Weightlifting

GANDHINAGAR, PTI: India finished 11th in the medal table with 11 medals while the women's team ended third in the rankings in the Asian Senior Weightlifting Championships which concluded here on Sunday.

India won one silver and 10 bronze to be placed 11th in the medal tally, with China perched at the top with 21 gold, 12 silver and 8 bronze.

North Korea finished second with 30 medals (18 gold, 11 silver, 1 bronze) while Chinese Taipei took the third spot with 3 gold, 7 silver and 3 bronze.

India stood third in the women's team rankings with 487 points. China led the women's team rankings with 578 points, followed by Chinese Taipei (491 points). China also led the men's team rankings with 593 points while India were placed at fifth with 379 points.

Ri Suk (63kg category) of North Korea was declared the best lifter among women while China's He Yueji (65kg category) was adjudged the best among men.

There were 25 world records broken while 27 new Asian records were set.

IN BRIEF

Manuja stays as SWAB prez

▶ The Times of India's Manuja Veerappa was re-elected as the president of the Sports Writers Association of Bangalore (SWAB) during its Annual General Meeting on Saturday, while Prajavani's Girish Doddamani was chosen as the secretary for the 2026-28 tenure, reports DHNS from Bengaluru.

Office bearers: President: Manuja Veerappa (The Times of India); **Vice President:** G Unnikrishnan (Press Trust of India); **Secretary:** Girish Doddamani (Prajavani); **Joint Secretary:** Manjunatha K (Vijaya Karnataka); **Treasurer:** N Sudarshan (The Hindu).

Executive Committee: Ashwin Achal (The Hindu); Kaushik Rangarajan (Cricbuzz); Ashish Pant (ESPN Cricinfo); Spandan Kaniyar (Kannada Prabha); Chitrangada Datta Chaudhuri (The Times of India); Gururaj BS (Vijayavani); Vignesh Bharadwaj (Deccan Herald).

Manav stars in FCWFU win

BENGALURU, DHNS: Manav (16th, 50th) netted a brace while his teammate Kibent (45th) scored one goal which were enough for FC White Field United to post a comfortable 3-0 win over La Esperanza in a South Zone Group A contest of the KSFA C Division League Championships at the Bangalore Football Stadium here on Sunday.

LOCAL FOOTBALL

Results (South Zone): Group A: FC White Field United: 3 (Manav 16th, 50th, Kibent 45th) bt La Esperanza: 0; Football Aura: 1 (Lohith B 35th) bt PKR FC: 0; Blue Star FC: 2 (Yogesh VR 42nd, Yashwanth S Kotan K 48th) bt Silican FC: 1 (Roshan R 26th pen).

Group B: Samurai Bangalore FA: 6 (Saroz 3rd, 20th, 30th, Karthik JB 7th OG, Advay Jhawar 32nd, Ajay Pragth Jeeth Rajan 50th) bt Undisputed FC: 0; Universal Blues FC: 11 (Abhijeth KA 4th, 12th, 23rd, 29th, 38th, 41st, 50th, Sarun VS 15th, 44th, Alphin K Wilson 24th, Afsal VS 60th) bt Velocita FC: 0; Blues Football Academy: 1 (Abhishek K 44th) bt Kodagu Colts FC: 0.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

IPL: Chennai Super Kings vs Sunrisers Hyderabad **(7:30 pm). LIVE** on **JioHotstar & Star Sports 1.**

FOOTBALL

ISL: Kerala Blasters FC vs FC Goa **(7:30 pm). LIVE** on **Sony Sports Ten 5, FanCode.**

Delhi deliver to keep their hopes alive

Starc, Rahul, Porel shine in crucial 5-wkt win over Rajasthan Royals

NEW DELHI, PTI

Mitchell Starc produced a game-changing four-wicket haul to halt Rajasthan Royals' charge before Delhi Capitals completed a crucial five-wicket win to keep their IPL playoffs hopes alive here on Sunday.

Starc's superb 4/40 sparked a dramatic collapse after Rajasthan had stormed to 160 for two in 14 overs, with the visitors eventually managing only 33 runs while losing six wickets to finish at 193 for eight.

Delhi then made the chase look comfortable for large parts as KL Rahul (56 off 42) and Abishek Porel (51 off 31) laid the perfect platform with a 105-run opening stand in just 10.1 overs.

While Porel attacked from the outset with seven fours and a six, Rahul paced his innings smartly before falling to Dasun Shanaka. Sahil Parakh chipped in with a quick 9 before skipper Axar Patel provided the finishing flourish with an unbeaten 34 off 18 balls, striking two fours and two sixes.

Despite Jofra Archer removing Tristan Stubbs and Brijesh Sharma getting rid of David Miller in the latter stages, Ashutosh Sharma's unbeaten 18 off just five balls sealed the chase in 19.2 overs.

The victory lifted Delhi from eighth to seventh in the points table with 12 points, keeping them in contention ahead of their final league match against Kolkata Knight Riders next Sunday, when they will know exactly what is required to secure a play-offs berth, provided a couple of other results go their way as well.

Earlier, opener Yashasvi Jaiswal began brightly, driving and cutting fluently against Starc, but his stay was brief as Lungi Ngidi removed him for 12. Teen sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi then lit up the innings with another fearless knock.

Delhi Capitals' Mitchell Starc produced a game-changing four-wicket haul against Rajasthan Royals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Sunday. PTI

SCOREBOARD

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: Yashasvi Jaiswal c Starc b Ngidi 12, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi c Miller b Tiwari 46, Dhruv Jurel lbw Ngidi 53, Riyan Parag c Axar b Starc 51, Donovan Ferreira c Axar b Starc 0, Ravi Singh lbw Starc 4, Shubham Dubey c Vijay b Tiwari 5, Dasun Shanaka c Stubbs b Starc 10, Jofra Archer (not out) 2, Adam Milne (not out) 2. Extras (LB-2, W-6) 8. **TOTAL (for 8 wkts, 20 overs) 193.**

Fall of wkts: 1-19, 2-89, 3-161, 4-161, 5-165, 6-173, 7-187, 8-191.

Bowling: Mitchell Starc 4-0-40-4, Lungi Ngidi 4-0-24-2, Tripurana Vijay 2-0-29-0, Mukesh Kumar 2-0-40-0, Madhav Tiwari 4-0-27-2, Axar Patel 4-0-31-0.

DELHI CAPITALS: Abishek Porel c Ferreira b Brijesh 51, KL Rahul b Shanaka 56, Sahil Parakh c Jurel b Archer 9, Axar Patel (not out) 34, Tristan Stubbs c Jaiswal b Archer 4, David Miller c Shanaka b Brijesh 9, Ashutosh Sharma (not out) 18. Extras (B-1, LB-2, W-13) 16. **TOTAL (for 5 wkts, 19.2 overs) 197.**

Fall of wickets: 1-105, 2-122, 3-133, 4-153, 5-175.

Bowling: Jofra Archer 4-0-35-2, Adam Milne 3.2-0-41-0, Brijesh Sharma 4-0-44-2, Dasun Shanaka 3-0-29-1, Yash Raj Punja 4-0-29-0, Donovan Ferreira 1-0-16-0.

Result: DC won by 5 wkts.

PoM: Mitchell Starc.

Sinner, Svitolina reign supreme

ROME, AFP

Jannik Sinner won the Italian Open on Sunday after beating Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-4 to claim a record-extending sixth consecutive Masters 1000 tournament victory.

World number one Sinner has now completed the 'Golden Masters' by winning all of the ATP's top-ranked events after becoming the first Italian champion at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago. Only Novak Djokovic had previously won all nine Masters 1000 events before Sunday, but there was little doubt about Sinner triumphing over the last 10 days.

Sinner heads into Roland Garros, which starts next weekend, on a 29-match winning streak after beating Ruud for a fifth time in as many meetings.

And his run of match wins is even longer, 34, in Masters 1000 tournaments, another record he has established in a season in which he has dominated the men's tour.

Sinner can complete his collection of Grand Slams at Roland Garros and with his great rival Carlos Alcaraz out of action few would bet against him securing a first title on Paris clay.

It was a good day for Italian tennis as Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori also won the men's doubles title, beating second seeds Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos 7-6 (10/8), 6-7 (3/7), 10-3.

Elina Svitolina won the women's title on Saturday after beating Coco Gauff 6-4, 6-7 (3/7), 6-2 to claim her third Rome title.

Ukraine's Svitolina hadn't claimed a WTA 1000 title since her last victory at the Foro Italico eight years ago but prevailed over the ever-erratic Gauff.

Italy's Jannik Sinner poses with the Italian Open trophy on Sunday. REUTERS

Lyles wins his first 100m of the season

TOKYO, AFP: Olympic champion Noah Lyles won his first 100m final of the season at the Golden Grand Prix in Tokyo on Sunday, making his trip to Japan "well worth the journey".

The American was slow out of the blocks in sunny, dry conditions at the Golden Grand Prix and did not take the lead until around halfway on his way to clocking 9.95sec.

More than two hours earlier, Lyles had run 10.05sec in his heat and said the day had been a "really good" start to his 2026 campaign.

"This might be my third or fourth-fastest season opener so it's a really good sign for the rest of the year," said the 28-year-old.

"I've been training really well so it was well worth the journey."

Lyles finished ahead of American Tate Taylor (10.04) and Britain's Jake Odey-Jordan (10.09).

"I wasn't really getting a good vibe on my back foot placement but sometimes you've just got to say, forget it, don't worry about it," said Lyles.

Praggu in joint lead

BUCHAREST, PTI: Indian GM R Praggnanandhaa **(in pic)** played out a draw with Vincent Keymer of Germany to stay in joint lead after the third round of the Super Chess Classic, part of the Grand chess tour.

After a well-deserved victory over Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan in the previous round, Praggnanandhaa took his tally to two points out of a possible three. He now shares the lead with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France, Dutch duo of Jorden Van Foreest and Anish Giri along with Keymer.

With half the field of ten-players sharing the lead, Americans Fabiano Caruana and Wesley So have both drawn all their games to be on 1.5 points while Iranian turned Frenchman Alireza Firouzja and local star Deac Bogdan-Daniel both have a half point apiece.

For Praggnanandhaa, the white pieces did not matter much. Keymer has been a consistent performer amongst the top players for quite some time and on this day too was in his element as he gave little chance to the Indian. Praggnanandhaa went for the Capablanca variation against the Nimzo Indian and Keymer sacrificed a pawn early in the opening to restore parity.

Upbeat Smith seeks two in a row

HITA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Less than 24 hours after winning the Karnataka Open ATP 50 Challenger event at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium, USA's Keegan Smith was back practicing at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium tennis courts here on Sunday.

The 50 ATP points he collected for his victory on Saturday has helped the 27-year-old's world ranking jump 46 places from 289 to 243. Now, Smith is hungry for more and is eyeing another deep run to gain 50 more points which could see him enter the top-200 when the SM Krishna Memorial tournament gets underway at the same venue from Monday.

Even at this week's ATP 50 Challenger, Smith is the top seed for a second time in a row. Similar to the American, a large part of the playing field remains the same with those who lost early last week aiming to do better and those who won a few rounds eager to win more.

In the opening round, Smith will take on India's Manish Sureshkumar, who won two rounds last week before being knocked out in the pre-quarterfinal. Behind the 6-foot-7-inch American are Great Britain's Alastair Gray and Hamish Stewart, seeded second and third respectively, and Russia's Petr Bar Biryukov is the fourth seed while Australia's Philip Sekulic -- the runner-up at Karnataka Open -- is fifth.

All eyes will be on Bengaluru boy Kriish Tyagi who created a flutter as a wild card entrant by reaching the semifinal. The 19-year-old local lad's good run has helped him climb to 956 from 1322 in the world ranking. Kriish, handed a wild card again, will take on world No. 560 Kuan-Yi Lee of Chinese Taipei in the first round.

Karan Singh -- the sixth seed last week who exited in the opener -- is again the only seeded Indian at seven. The 22-year-old from Karnal, Haryana is seeking redemption as he hopes to get past Mitsuki Wei Kang Leong of Malaysia in the opener.

Kshitij stuns Bouzige

In the first qualifying round which began on Sunday, 17-year-old wild card entrant Aradhya Kshitij scored a 6-3, 7-5 win over Australia's Moerani Bouzige, ranked 456 in the world.

The teen will be joined by Nitin Kumar Sinha and Dev Javia -the only other Indians to enter the second round of qualifying.

Keegan Smith starts as the favourite in the SM Krishna Memorial ATP 50 Challenger that begins on Monday in Bengaluru.

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